Rural Settlements in Medieval Europe

Papers of the 'Medieval Europe Brugge 1997' Conference
Volume 6

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Guy De Boe & Frans Verhaeghe

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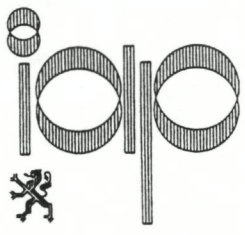
Prof. Dr. Guy De Boe



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06 Rural Settlements - De Landelijke Wereld - Le monde Rural - Ländliche Siedlungen

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Elisabeth Zadora-Rio
Marnix Pieters

Preface

It can reasonably argued that fieldwork and research concerning the rural world is one of the oldest branches of modern medieval and – be it to a somewhat more limited extent – later archaeology. In view of the importance of the rural component in medieval and later society, this is hardly surprising. It can also be argued that the emergence and development of this particular field of archaeological research is strongly indebted to questions raised by historians and related to a particular problem, to wit the – mainly late medieval – desertion of villages. The names of scholars such as Maurice Beresford, John G. Hurst, Walter Janssen, Stanislaw Tabaczynski, Jean-Marie Pesez, Gabrielle Démians d'Archimbaud and many others speak for themselves, as do those of sites such as Wharram Percy in Yorkshire. The early archaeological interest in medieval deserted villages also led to specific research groups, amongst which the British *D.M.V.R.G.* or *Deserted Medieval Village Research Group* immediately comes to mind.

The *D.M.V.R.G.* was of course mainly concerned with the British Isles but its evolution over *Medieval Village Research Group* to – after joining with the *Moated Sites Research Group*, which focused on yet another type of mainly if not exclusively rural settlement – *Medieval Settlement Research Group* does provide a nice illustration of how the field developed, both in the United Kingdom and on the European Continent. Indeed, since the 50s and 60s, the archaeological study of the medieval and later rural world has moved on and this in more ways than one. The work no longer focuses almost exclusively on deserted medieval villages and the field has expanded in many directions to encompass all kinds of new issues. These include not only the many different forms of rural settlement – isolated, nucleated or agglomerated – their variations, their origins and their development through time but also their setting, the landscapes in which the settlements developed and how they changed those landscapes, and the intricate relations between rural settlement and other material components of medieval and later society such as towns, castles, monasteries or other kinds of ecclesiastical, military and/or residential units. The archaeological study of individual buildings and hamlets or villages continues to form the backbone of the work and case-studies continue to abound.

But since the 50s and 60s the field has also changed in other ways. Over the past three decades, the attention paid to issues related to the different kinds and levels of spatial organisation has grown continuously and is arguably the main or at least the most seminal development to be noted. Specifically over the past 15 years, intra-site approaches have increasingly been complemented with inter-site, local, micro-regional and regional ones; simultaneously, more and more attention now also goes to site hierarchies and spatial organisation on a much larger scale as well as to the spatial organisation of the rural landscape in terms of estates, holdings, plots, and what can reasonably be termed catchment areas. In addition, the growing impact of the natural sciences and more particularly of the environmental studies is also making itself felt – though still far less obviously than in the case of other categories of settlements. At the same time medieval and later rural archaeology seem to have moved away from the older deterministic approaches and interpretations. Rather, the development of the many forms of rural settlement and the ways in which they were influenced by and changed the local and regional environmental, social and economic setting is more and more looked in terms of human behaviour and interactions.

Again – and as with the other themes discussed at the Brugge conference – the subject of rural settlement cannot and should not be divorced from the many other concerns of medieval and later archaeology. The sheer complexity of the subject entails inevitable links with many other topics presented and discussed within the context of the other sections of the Medieval Europe Brugge 1997 conference, among them material culture (section 07), trade and exchange (section 03), environment and subsistence (section 09). But the rural world also includes and interacts with specific types of sites and settlements such as towns (section 01), castles and defense-works (section 11) and religious buildings (section 04) and cemeteries (section 02). In addition, art and architecture, including the

meanings and the perception thereof are not absent from the rural world (section 05), while the environment and the subsistence problems (section 09) equally constitute major concerns. Some aspects of transportation and travel technology and organization (section 08) should not be forgotten either, and, finally, spatial analysis – the importance of which has already been emphasized earlier – raises many theoretical and methodological problems relevant to the study of the rural world and some of these have been discussed within the context of section 10 (Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology) of the Brugge conference. All this sufficiently illustrates the need for bringing together the information related to the many aspects of the medieval and later worlds and societies, which was one of the basic philosophies of the York and Brugge MEDIEVAL EUROPE conferences.

For sheer practical reasons, however, a number of contributions presented on the occasion of the international conference on medieval and later archaeology MEDIEVAL EUROPE BRUGGE 1997 which took place in Brugge, Belgium, on 1 through 4 October 1997, have been grouped in section 06 under the general heading *Rural settlements - Le monde rural - Ländliche Siedlungen - De landelijke wereld.* The section was organized by Elizabeth Zadora-Rio (C.N.R.S., France) and Marnix Pieters (Institute for the Archaeological Heritage, Flanders, Belgium).

The present volume offers a collection of pre-printed papers, a number of which were presented orally and debated during the sessions of section 06. Unfortunately, a number of contributors to this section did not submit a text in time for inclusion in the present volume while other colleagues could not attend and present their contribution. In a few cases, texts were graciously made available for inclusion in the present volume but due to the large offer of papers could not be presented orally. All this explains why the general structure and the contents of the present volume do not conform in all details to the programme of the conference. Nevertheless, the volume has been organized keeping in mind both the complexity of the subject and the general lines of the structure of section 06 of the conference as originally proposed by the organizers. The texts available for the present volume have therefore been grouped in five sections, which at the same time largely reflect the current concerns and state of research in the archaeological study of the medieval and later rural world:

- A first subsection, sub-titled *Regional settlement studies*, groups eight contribution which present regional surveys and/or an assessment of the current state of the work and future issues related to the rural settlement of larger areas.
- The second subsection groups twelve studies concerning specific sites and has been sub-titled *Case studies*. They reflect the continuing importance of this type of work which offers ever more building blocks for new questions and approaches, including regional and even supra-regional ones. While focusing of specific sites, these studies often also address broader issues relevant to the individual site in question and should therefore not be considered simple site-reports.
- With four contributions, the subsection *Territorial organisation and central places* looks at relations between different sites and types of sites as well as at relations between different components of a territorial unit.
- Three papers, all of them concerned with the Iberian peninsula and with the specific subjects of silos, storage and water management as well as with their potential for understanding the often regional organization and development of rural settlement, have been brought together in a special subsection *Settlement and rural infrastructure* which follows the previous subsection because the notion of 'organization' is very much present in the comments.
- Finally, five contributions brought together in the subsection *Settlements and landscapes* return to the theme of the broader context and setting of rural settlements, in terms of either chronological development or in terms of landscape development and organization.

Of necessity, the papers are rather short and the volume of course does not do total justice to the many excavations and the wealth of other types of research work concerning rural settlement, the rural landscape or some specific types of rural sites. Thus, for instance, mills and what has been termed 'moated sites' are largely if not totally absent from the picture. Nor does the volume provide a complete overview of the results attained and knowledge acquired. Nevertheless, the 33 papers included in the present volume emphasize the continuing importance and vitality of the study of the medieval and later rural world while at the same time providing a good idea of the potential and of the present state of the work in this particular field of research. They also demonstrate both the complexity of the subject and the recent developments in terms of spatial approaches. This is even more true when the volume is considered within the context of the other volumes in the present series of volumes linked to the Medieval Europe conference and when the reader takes into account that the rural world is also very much present – directly or indirectly – in these other volumes.

Frans Verhaeghe & Guy De Boe

Matej Ruttkay

Early Medieval Settlement Structure in Slovakia

The tradition of archaeological research on medieval Slovakia is more than 50 years old. During this period, scores of studies have been published and excavations carried out, which resulted in a vast source base.

The macro-region under discussion is of lowland character with elevations ranging from 94 to 300 m a.s.l. Approximately one sixth of the region is situated at an elevation of over 300 m a.s.l.

The existence of man in this region in the past was determined by several factors. The density of settlement was to a significant degree determined by the quality of local sources of energies, water sources being among the most important ones. Other important factors are the quality of soil, thermal energy, slope tilt, etc. Undoubtedly, a very important role was played by social and economic relations in the individual societies and the global geopolitical situation. Moreover, the development of the settlement process was determined by the occurrence of mineral resources (iron ore, stone, ores of non-ferrous metals, etc.).

At the present time we have at our disposal information from more than 2100 sites from within the macro-region. More than 1800 of them have been documented archaeologically (66 % of these are settlements, 26 % burial places, 5.6 % sacral buildings and 2.4 % are not documented in a detailed way). The cartographic evaluation of the sites discovered in individual decades reveals a certain lack of balance of research in certain regions. The rise in the number of archaeological sites from 1950 to 1995 is illustrated in Fig. 1. While about 320 sites were known in 1950, by the year 1996 this number increased to 1995 sites.

As far as the way of acquisition of information is concerned, the absolute majority of sites were identified through surface surveys (998, *i.e.* 45 %) and in the surveys carried out during construction activities (376, *i.e.* 17 %). Together, these two ways represent 62 %. The second largest group consists of localities where minor conservation actions were carried out (601, *i.e.* 28 %). In 105 (5 %) sites major conservation actions or systematic investigations took place. The rest of the finds represents isolated finds or objects from different collections which cannot be localized in a more exact way.

As far as dating is concerned, the localities can be divided into three groups:

1) relatively reliably dated (larger collections obtained mostly by systematic research) – 31 %,
2) less reliably dated (*e.g.* larger collections of sherds from investigations, etc.) – 63 %,
3) approximate dating (isolated, less pronounced finds) – 6 %.

The majority of finds (84 %) are reliably localized, 11 % are approximately localized and the localization of 5 % of the finds is impossible.

The settlements from the 6th to 12th centuries in southwestern Slovakia include a broad typological range of objects Taken together, 2978 objects have been documented. Unfortunately, only limited or no information is available for a large number of them. The basic classification is purely typological with respect to the appearance of objects and not to their functions. The database which has been worked out gives different numbers of individual objects:

I. buildings - houses (647 objects),
II. isolated heating devices (376 objects),
III.A storage pits (559 objects),
III.B cooking pits (127 objects),
III.C other pits (282 objects),

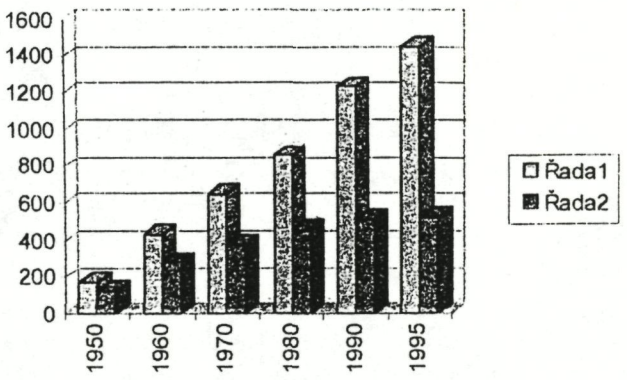

Fig. 1. - *Western Slovakia. Gradual growth of known archaeological sites from 1950 to 1995.*

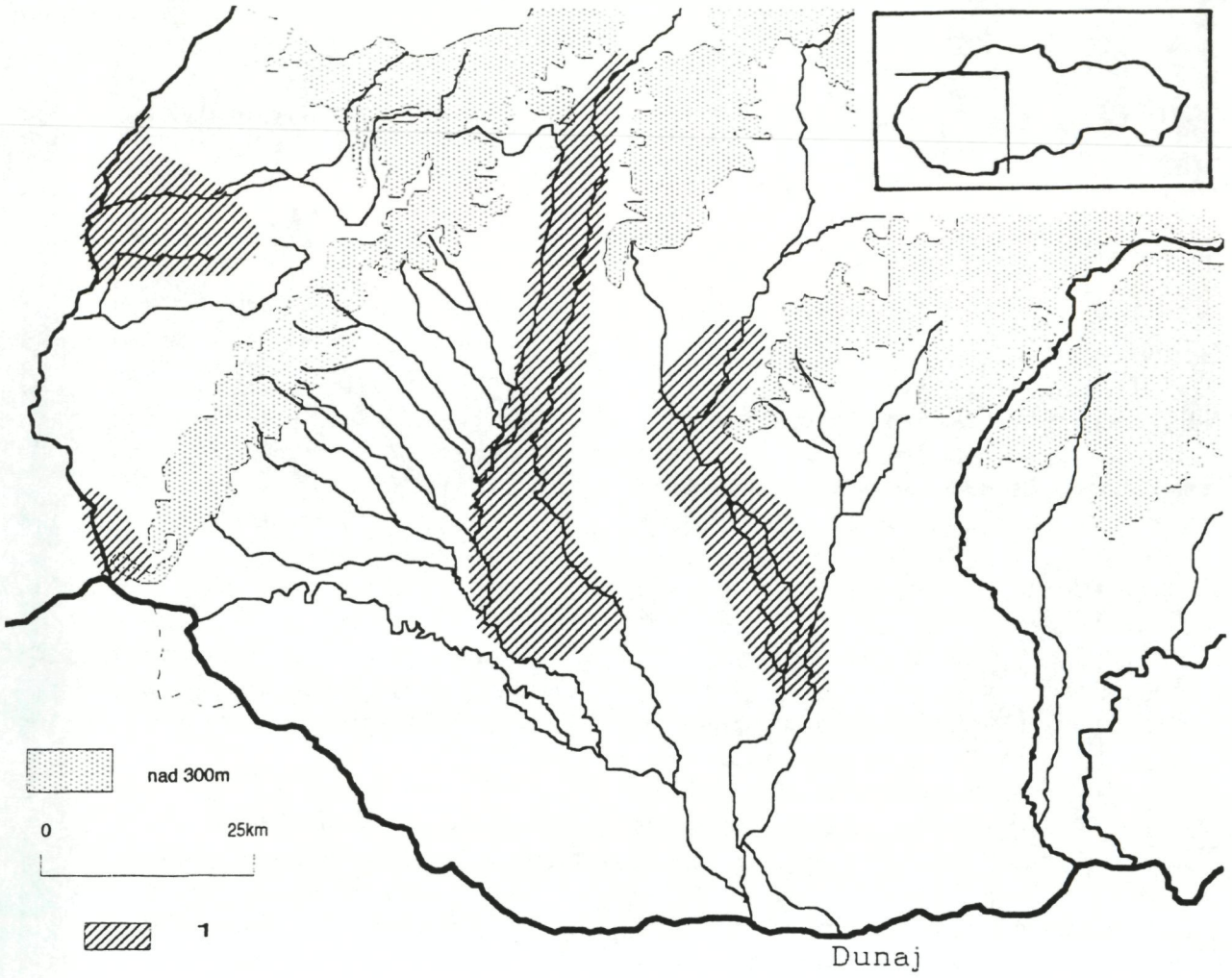

Fig. 2. - *Settlement of western Slovakia in 6th century (1. Slavs).*

IV. troughs (50 objects),
V. wells (15 objects),
VI. manufacturing objects (101 objects),
VII. other objects, not specified (334 objects)

For almost 500 other objects (sites), no information is available and these were not included in the reported work at all. During the whole studied period a relatively high proportion of finds belong to houses. From the 6th to the 12th century, the proportion of storage pits and isolated clay ovens gradually rises, while the number of cooking pits decreases. The representation of the remaining types of objects shows no significant fluctuations.

The principal type of house in the 6th-12th centuries is represented by slightly sunken or above-ground objects of a quadrangle ground plan (surface: 6-20 m²; most frequent depth: 30-60 cm). When compared to surrounding regions of Central Europe, the presence of a considerable variety of these houses is a specific feature of southwestern Slovakia. it is a feature which is very pronounced, particularly in the 6th-10th centuries.

During the period under discussion, the heating device used most frequently in the house was the stone oven. Open fireplaces were used somewhat less frequently, while clay ovens occurred the least. From the chronological point of view, the representation of the fireplace is the most stable one. Stone ovens occur most commonly in Horizon I and II (6th-10th centuries), while in the next period their occurrence drops significantly. Clay ovens reveal a reverse development and their occurrence rises especially from the 11th century onwards.

The utilization of a specific type of oven depended first and foremost on its function and local sources of building materials were of minor importance. The analysis proved that the theory of ethnic determination of clay oven occurrence is unjustified (these ovens were found even in contexts with the Prague Type ceramics). An exception may be the clay ovens of the 11th-13th centuries, which markedly 'penetrated' the region of the middle course of the river Váh and the lower part of the Dudváh basin, *i.e.* the regions where they had not been found before. This fact may be possibly connected with the migration of populations from the middle course of the river Nitra and the lower course of the river Hron to this territory (the retreat of inhabitants before the expansion of Old Magyars?).

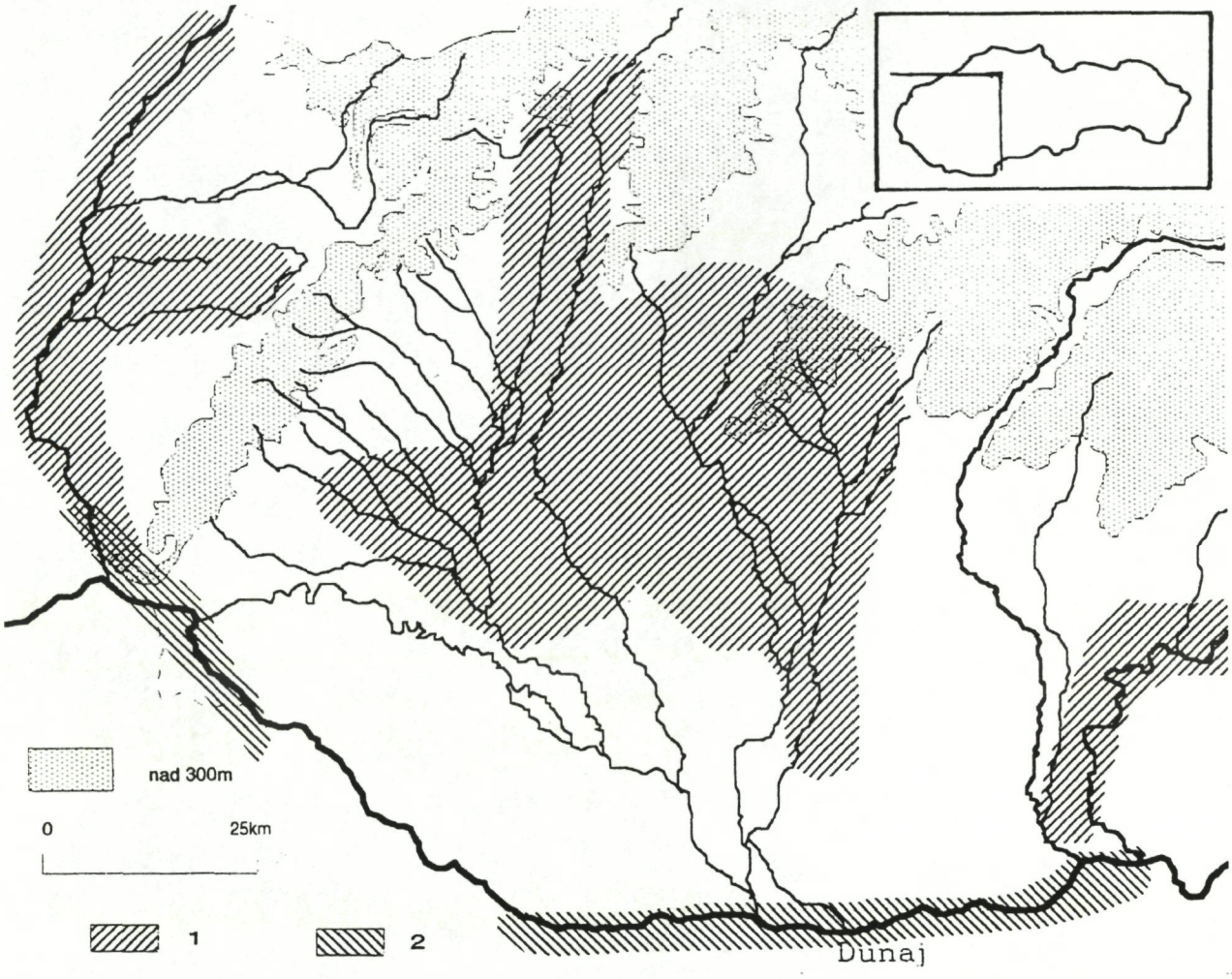

Fig. 3. - *Settlement of western Slovakia in the middle of 7th century (1. Slavs, 2. Avars).*

The cartographic demarcation of the sites dating from the 6th century does not give a picture of the main spheres of interest of the oldest Slavonic groups (Fig. 2). There was a moderate concentration found in the region of the middle part of the Nitra basin, in the basin of the Váh and in Záhorie (western Slovakia).

In the first half of the 7th century, the area of the middle course of the river Nitra seems to have been again the most densely settled one. In the remaining territory of the region, only sparse islets were settled. A relatively thin network of settlements represented by the Prague Type ceramics is supplemented, like in the previous phase, by a system of cremation burial places. In the close proximity to the Danube a new phenomenon occurs: the first burial sites with skeletons (Fig. 3).

In the second half of the 7th century, the number of settlements increases markedly (Fig. 3). The boundary of localities represented by the Prague Type ceramics (Slavonic settlement) moves southward to the line Bratislava - Galanta - Bajc - Chl'aba. At the same time, settlements characterized by a different material culture (Avar Kaganate) were being founded on the left bank of the Danube - Štúrovo - Obid (Zábojník 1988) and Komárno (Trugly 1993). Between these groups an uninhabited (buffer) strip of land some 20-40 kilometres wide remained open. This is an important discovery proving that between the Slavonic world north of the Danube (western Slovakia) and the Avar Kaganate, there were no closer links, either peaceful or warlike. In this connection the question of the localization of the Empire of Samo appears in a new light. It is very likely that the empire of the Slavonic tribes, led by the Frankish merchant Samo, was established in the region of immediate contacts between the Slavs and the Avars. As this relation is absent in the studied region, it is likely that the crystallizing core of Samo's Empire cannot have been the region of western Slovakia (with the exception of its westernmost edge).

The situation changed more markedly at the end of the 7th century and in the 8th century. After the relatively thin and sparse settlement in the 6th-7th centuries, a pronounced rise in the total number of settlement units was recorded (Fig. 4) and the density of population increased. Besides 82 localities dated back to the 7th-8th centuries or to the 7th-9th centuries respectively, 112 localities dated back to the 8th

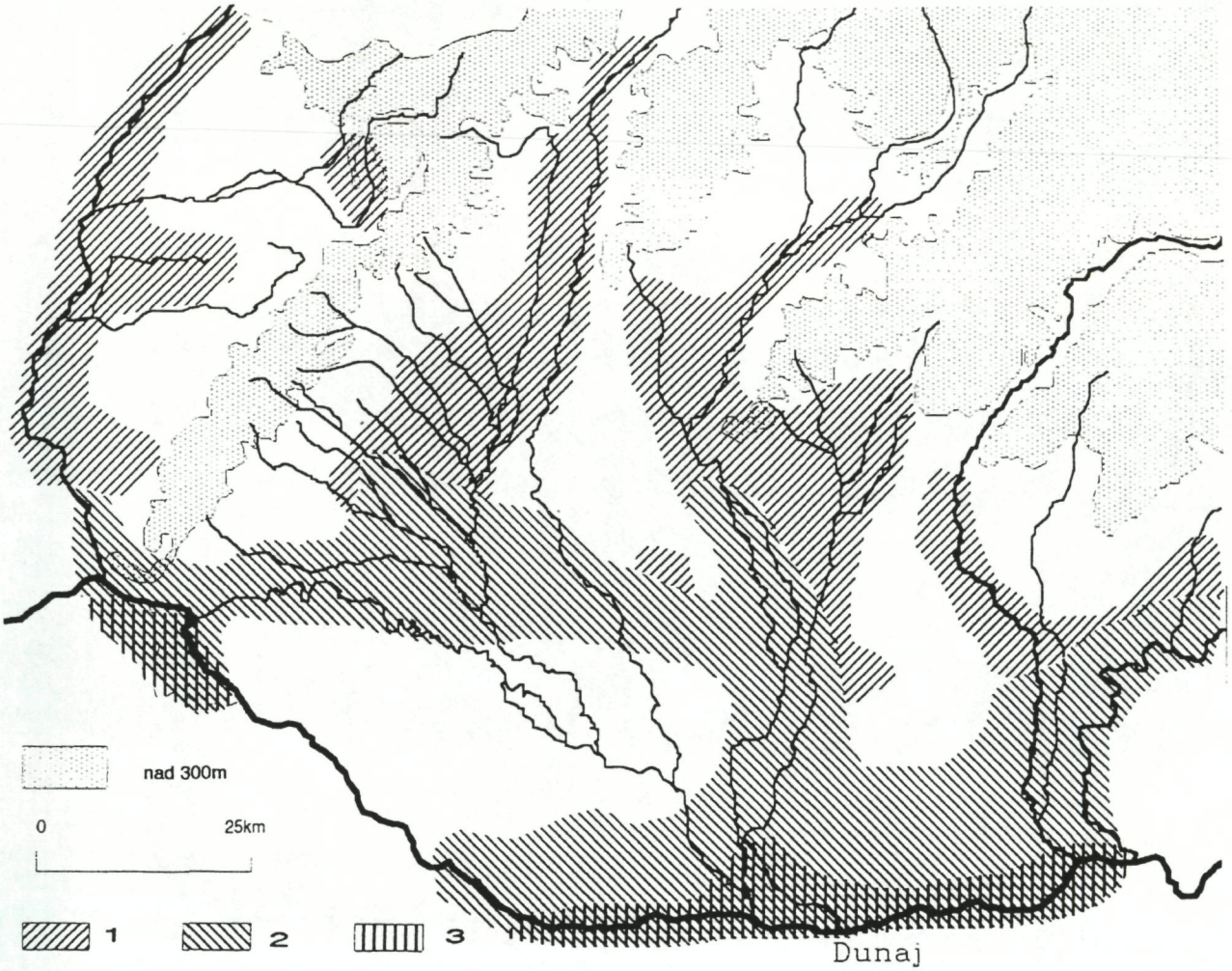

Fig. 4. - *Settlement of western Slovakia in 8th century (1. Slavs, 2. Avars and Slavs, 3. Avars).*

or to the 8th-9th centuries belong to this group. The most densely populated areas – especially in the last third of the 8th century – belong to the region of the middle course of the river Nitra, the area demarcated by the triangle Sered' - Senec - Galanta, the left bank of the Morava river between Bratislava and Skalica and the middle course of the river Váh. A relatively dense network of settlements is documented in the basin of the Zitava river, on the upper course of the river Nitra and on the middle course of the river Ipel' (near Šahy).

As far as settlements are concerned and on the basis of the overall habitus and material culture, nearly the whole region studied seems to be a uniform unit linked up to an older settlement. An exception here are the southernmost areas where besides the typical ceramics of the Danubian type, the material culture includes a type of coarser ceramics (so-called Avar ceramics) together with a high quality type of grey ceramics made on the potter's wheel (Štúrovo, Obid, Komárno).

As follows from the above-mentioned facts, in the 8th century, the settlement network gradually becomes denser and regions with a relatively compact settlement pattern were being established. At the end of the 8th century, the nuclei of economic and social centres – hillforts – were gradually established (Pobedim, Majcichov, Nitra, Bratislava). They are generally preceded by a gradual accumulation of settlements in a relatively small region.

In the 9th century, the Slavonic substratum became predominant. As it follows from the total number of known localities, the increase in comparison with the previous horizon represents a significant change per century. The overall character of the settlements and of the material culture discovered is of the same type throughout the whole region. Due to the lack of significant chronological elements it is very difficult, for the time being, to distinguish the objects and localities from the 9th and 10th centuries reliably, which would be very important from a historical point of view. On the other hand, the pronounced similarity of the material culture from the 9th and 10th centuries clearly negates the theories about the destructions by or at least the destructive arrival of Old Magyar military companies.

On one side there was a clear tendency towards the extension of settled areas, on the other side the gradual concentration of the settlement network in

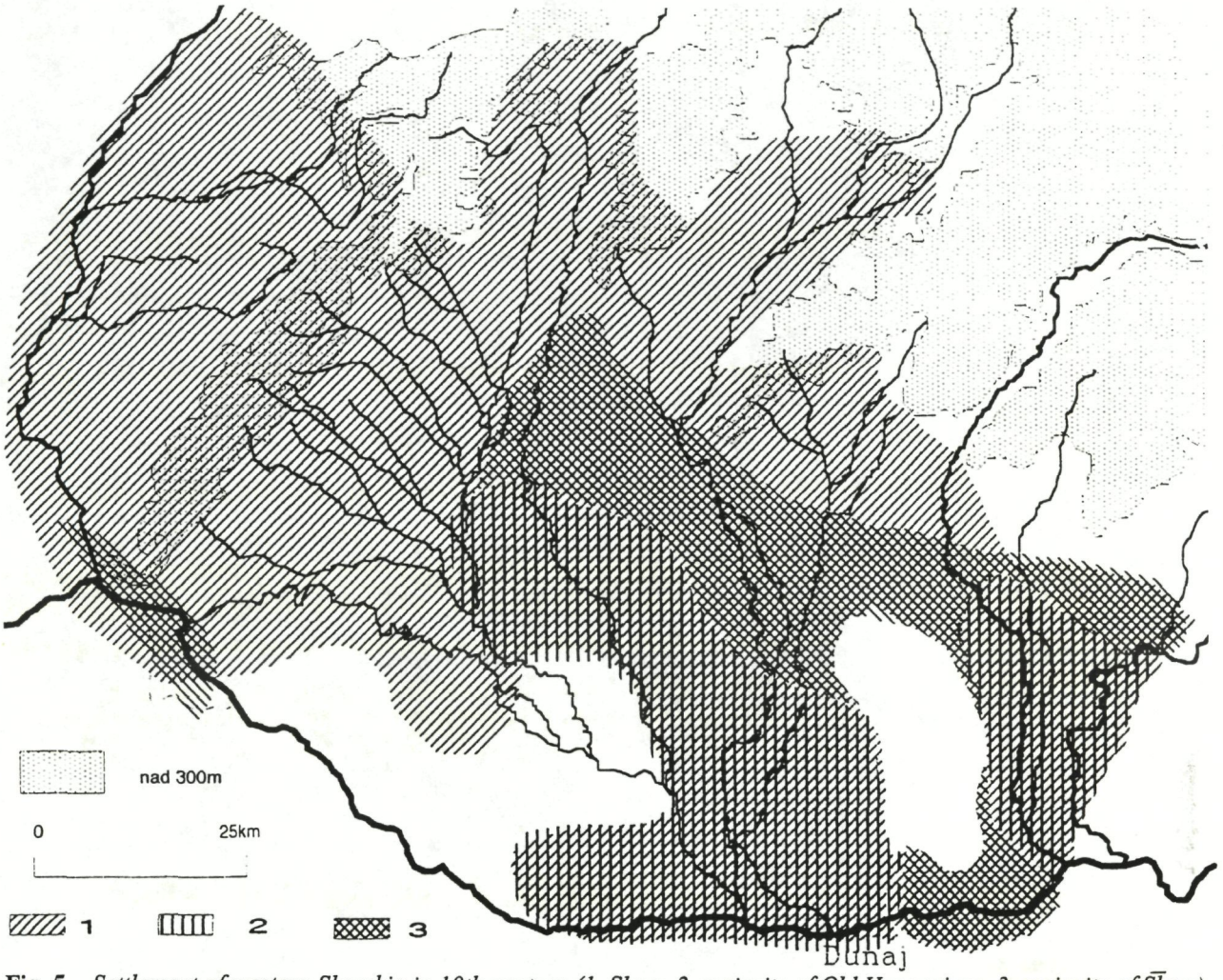

Fig. 5. - *Settlement of western Slovakia in 10th century (1. Slavs, 2. majority of Old Hungarians, 3. majority of Slavs).*

the regions which had already been settled in the previous horizon took place. At the same time, some territories became almost devoid of settlements or were settled sparsely, as with the larger part of Zitný ostrov on the south and a relatively large area between the rivers Zitava and Hron reaching almost up to the Pohronský Inovec Mountains in the east.

In the 10th century, it is possible to document the boundary of the Old Magyar interference (the river Dudváh in the west, the line Hlohovec - Nitra - Levice, Fig. 5, in the north) also in material culture (graves with armaments and a horse harness – sabre, sword, bow, bit, stirrup).

Their establishment is a result of vast social and economic changes in the Middle Ages. On one side there were huge organizational and administrative units built by a higher feudal power (residential, organizing, military and administrative functions), on the other side there were smaller units often performing a wide range of functions (defensive, economic, administrative etc.).

The majority of central settlements or settlement areas respectively kept their role in the following centuries.

Archaeological and also historical sources document a marked influence of Christian faith on the forming of contemporary society. This is linked with the origins of church building in the territory of present-day western Slovakia. The occurrence of stone sacral objects is sporadic and it is linked with the presence of the highest social strata. So far four (Bratislava - Castle, Bratislava - Devín, Ducové, Nitra - Martinský vrch) or six respectively (Nitra - Na vršku, Nitra - Castle) sacral buildings have been convincingly dated to Horizon II. All of these sacral buildings are directly linked with hillforts.

As follows from the above, the principal tendency towards the densifying and expansion of the settlement network in the 9th-10th centuries took place in the northern half of the region studied and was directed to the north. It means that for some reason, the contemporary inhabitants preferred localities situated relatively higher to apparently more favourable places (from our point of view) in the southern part of the Danubian basin. The expansion of the Old Magyars was directed at a relatively sparsely settled area and did not aim at having a direct destructive impact on the settlement structure.

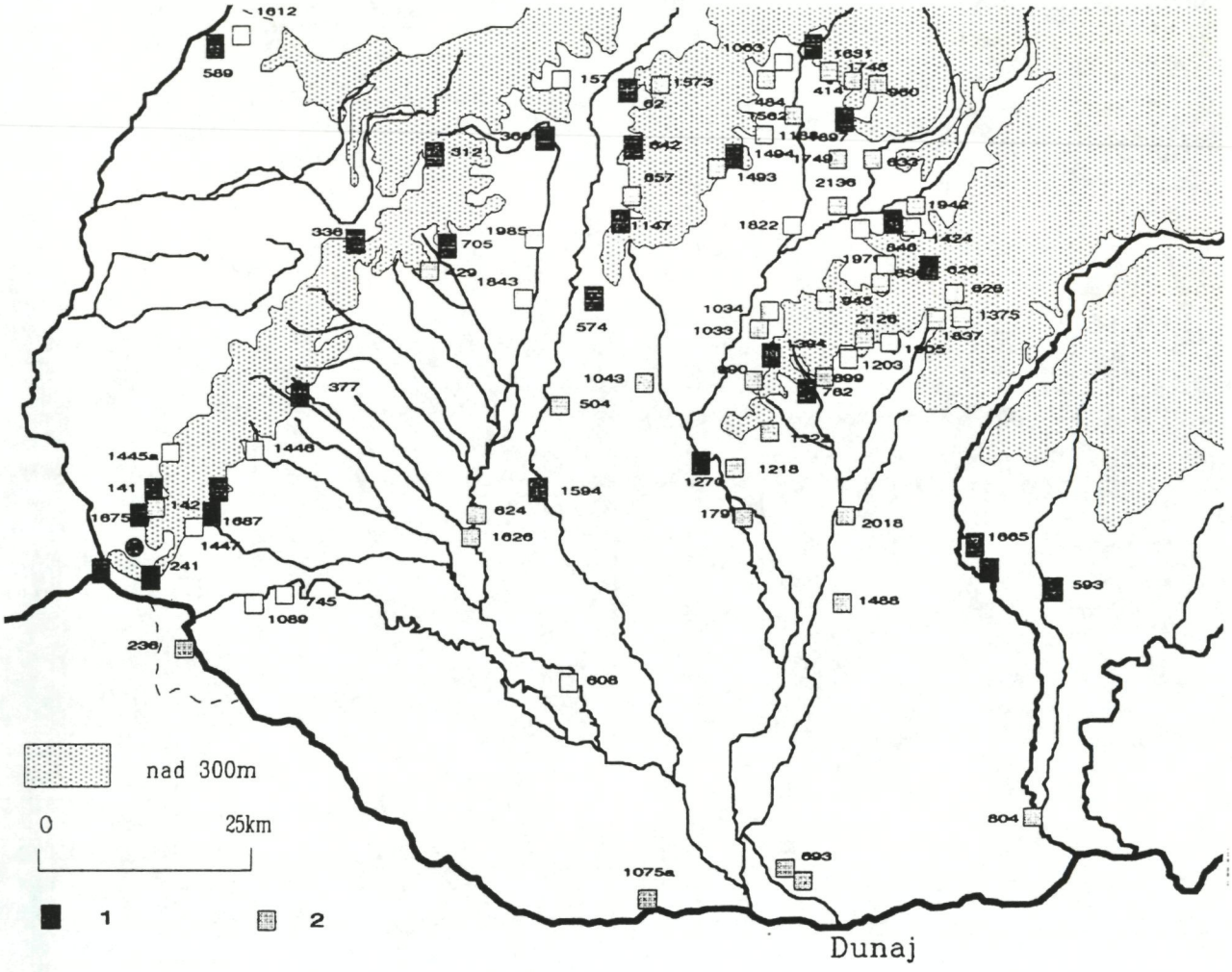

Fig. 6. - *Western Slovakia. Distribution map of fortifications within the macro-region (1. castle, 2. moated site).*

After the break-up of the Great Moravian Empire, the settlement declined in the 11th and in the first half of the 12th century when the territory became part of the Early Hungarian feudal state. At the beginning of this period, most of the hillforts ceased to exist and only those of primordial importance survived and later became centres of power and administration (Nitra, Bratislava, Starý Tekov). This situation may be explained by the inability of the Slavonic economic and administrative structures of the 9th and 10th centuries to accommodate to the newly formed Early Hungarian establishment.

When compared with the previous horizon, the total area settled does not change significantly. The whole region of the basin of the river Nitra remains the central settlement area. A characteristic phenomenon is a drop in the density of the settlement network in Záhorie and a mild concentration in the southern parts of the region (eastern part of Záhoria, lower part of the Hron basin, the basin of the river Zitava), in the central part of the Nitra basin and in the basin of the river Váh. At the same time a noticeable decrease in the settlement density in the upper part of the Zitava basin and in the Nitra basin in the area between Nitra and Nové Zámky can be discerned.

A conspicuous decrease in the number of settlements – the destruction of the settlement network – can be discerned only in the western part of the region. This development was caused by several factors – adverse climatic conditions (rise in the levels of water courses), decreasing soil fertility, permanent conflicts with western neighbours.

In the 11th century, the border of the Hungarian Kingdom was situated on the river Váh (the Dudváh respectively). The western part of the region probably belonged in the political sphere of the Bohemian Kingdom. In the 11th century, monasteries were established on the northern edge of the Old Magyar dominion (Nitra, Skalka Hronský Benadik) which played an important role in the conquest of the northern part of present Slovakia.

The 11th century is the time when hillforts could no longer find their place in the qualitatively new settlement structure. The only exceptions are the central hillforts which were gradually transformed to comitate castles (Nitra, Bratislava, Starý Tekov). These can already be considered to be real castles.

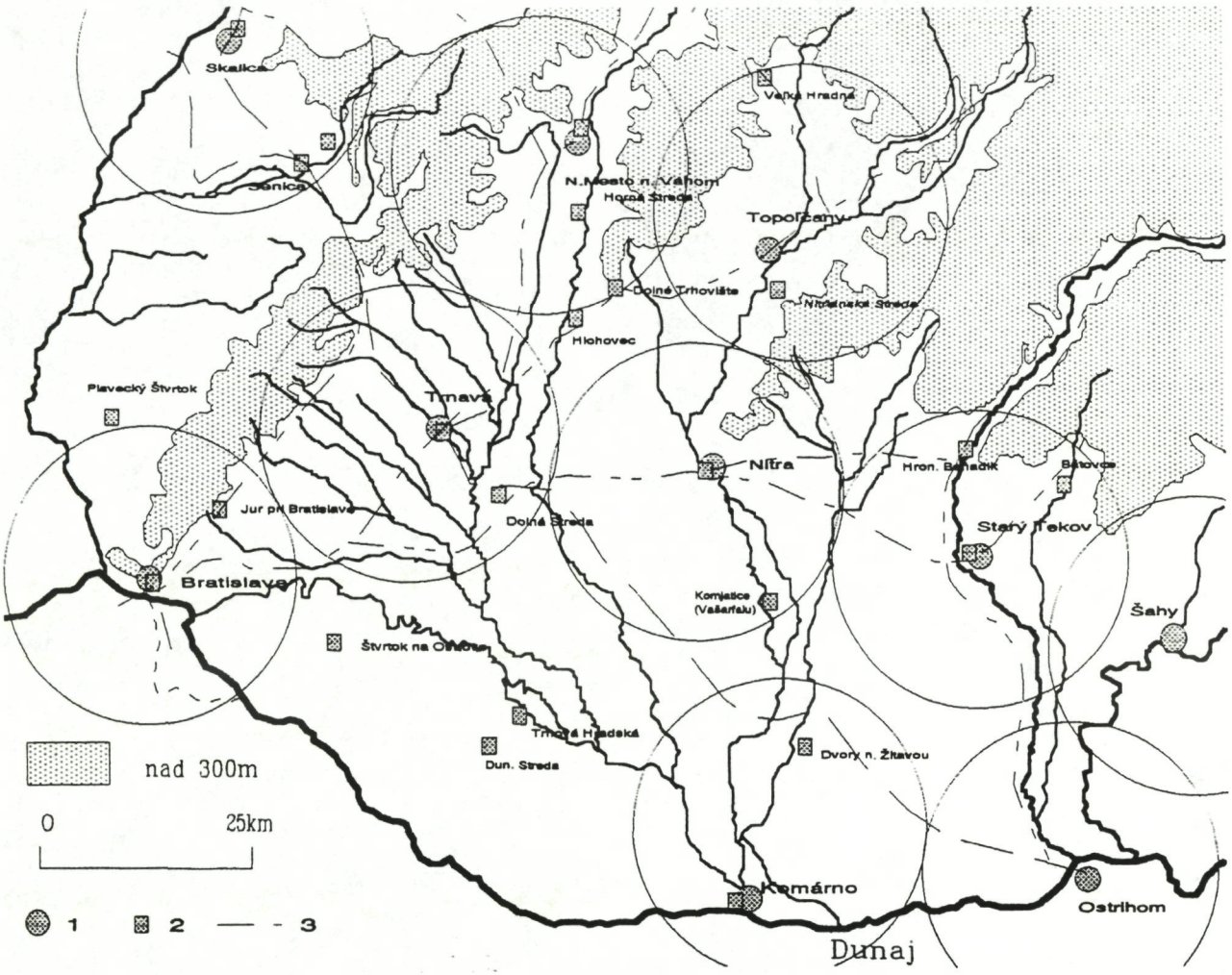

Fig. 7. - *Western Slovakia. Towns with privileges and their economic background (1. town, 2. market).*

During the 11th century, the whole region became unified from the cultural point of view – the material inventory obtained a supra-ethnic character and it is almost impossible to trace any ethnic differences. The fact that beside the Slavs a considerably high number of other ethnic groups were found in this region is documented by written sources. The multi-ethnic character of southwestern Slovakia is documented by the investigation of the meso-region (the Slavs, the Hungarians, the Kalisz, the Cuman, the Pechenegs).

By the end of the first half of the 12th century, the situation at was already consolidated. Together with economic development, settlement started to increase again. This process is directly connected with the gradual rise of towns. Increasing social differentiation within the early feudal society activated the building of castles (most often they were small fortified areas with a wooden or stone tower-shaped construction). The castles served military purposes as well as being symbols of the rising nobility. The settlement complexes show considerable stability and generally they contain several 'central points', a church or from the 13th century onwards also residences of local nobles.

In southwestern Slovakia 43 fortifications of the lower nobility have been documented so far and another 12 are uncertain (Fig. 6). The dating of their construction back to the 11th century is more or less hypothetical, without any convincing evidence. Eleven registered fortifications are supposed to have been built at the end of the 12th and in the first half of the 13th century. The locality Partizánske - Šimonovany and the wood-and-earth fortification in Topol'cianky are the most pronounced examples. In two cases, stone constructions are documented; in the remaining localities wooden structures were probably erected. The boom in the construction of small fortifications started as late as the half of the 13th century, *i.e.* after the Tartar invasion, when the need for a more thorough defense became obvious.

One of the results of the structural change of original dominion royal property in Hungary is the formation of towns (Fig. 7). The process of medieval town formation can be summarized as follows (Kucera 1978):

1) up to the end of the 10th century: a period of large popular and densely populated towns of the

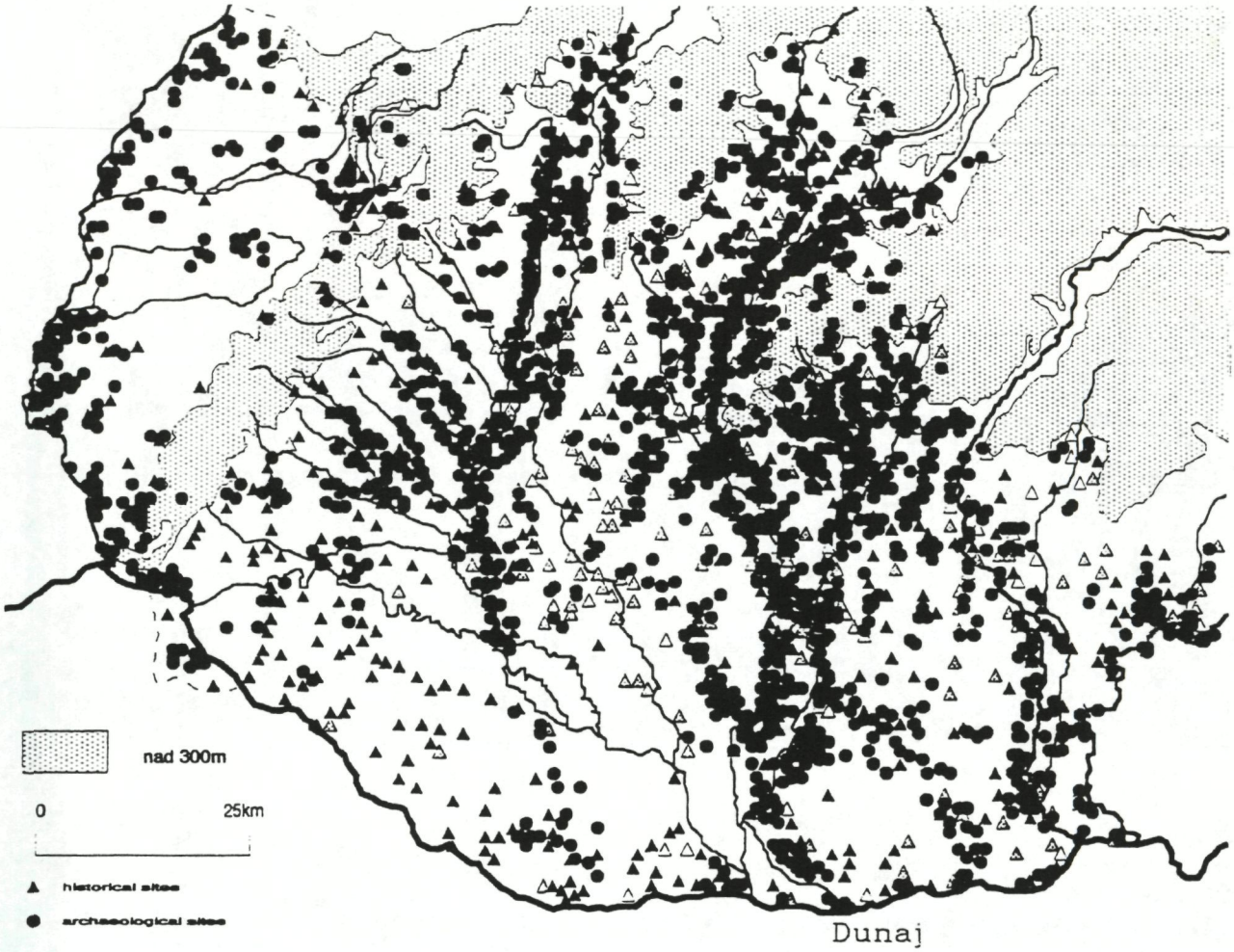

Fig. 8. - *Western Slovakia. Early Medieval settlement (6th-13th century), general distribution map.*

castle town type with a pronounced political and military function and with an economy which was strongly subordinated the sovereign's power;

2) from the 11th century up to the year 1242: a period of the formation of large towns of different types on the basis of older settlement and town cultures and centres; political, administrative and military functions gradually recede to the background and the functions of commerce and merchants' guilds together with the formation of free town artisans developed in a pronounced way;

3) from 1242 to 1306-1309: a period of the most productive growth of medieval towns.

The social and economic function of these towns is a characteristic feature; the towns were now acting as the implementors of merchandising and monetary relations; the free mercantile guild or entrepreneurial activity respectively (commonly characterized as '*ius fori*') came to the fore. The whole of economic and social life was subordinated to the town community and the town also acted as a social and judicial institution to the outside. The town was often built and developed according to the proved organizational forms known abroad.

Town privileges started to be given to the settlements of an urban nature as late as the second third of the 13th century. Five (or six respectively) towns are documented in the studied macro-region: Trnava - 1238 Zumbothel, Starý Tekov - 1240 *Suburbium castri de Bors*, Nitra - 1248 Nitra, Komárno - 1265 Camarum, Bratislava - 1291 Posonium, Nové Mesto nad Váhom 1253 (?).

The comparison of archaeological sources and excavations with historical sources shows that archaeological excavations and research are the main information sources up to the end of the 12th century. Starting from the 13th century, both types of archaeological information are balanced and later historical sources gradually prevail over archaeological ones (Fig. 8).

The cartographic evaluation of finding localities also allowed us to identify the most important crossings – fords on the river Danube and so-called 'main roads-. The most important fords were located near Štúrovo, Patince, Komárno and Bratislava.

From the above-mentioned facts, it appears that in the 6th to 13th centuries the lowland regions were most densely settled areas. The mapping of find-

spots and localities indicates that the southern part of the region was relatively less densely settled (Zitný ostrov, the areas between the rivers Zitava and Hron and between the Nitra and the Váh). In the areas which are the most important from the point of view of settlement development (the basins of the Zitava and the Nitra), settlement density gradually increased during the whole of the period studied.

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Regionale Beziehungen der Dorfsiedlungen Südostungarns vom 10. bis 13. Jahrhundert

In diesem Referat wird eines der Elemente des sich zwischen dem 10. und 13. Jahrhundert in der Alföld-Region des Karpatenbeckens entfaltenden Siedlungsnetzes untersucht, namlich die Dörfer in einer engeren Region zwischen der Körös- und Maros-Mündung beiderseits der Theiß. Im Rahmen der ungarischen dörflichen Ausgrabungen, die in unserem Komitat nicht planmäßig und systematisch durchgeführt wurden, wurden die innere Struktur und die Objekte dieser in erster Linie untersucht. Dementsprechend, also wegen der Zufalligkeit des archäologischen Quellenmaterials konnte ich die Aufmerksamkeit der Analyse des sich entwickelnden Dorfnetzes nur in bescheidenem Maße zuwenden (Abb. 1).

In der ersten Hälfte unseres Jahrhundertes entfaltete Gábor Csallány eine regelmäßige Tätigkeit mit der Freilegung von Gräberfeldern aus dem 10. bis 12. Jahrhundert, was das Sammeln des mittelalterlichen archäologischen Denkmaterials anbelangt. Als Márta Széll die mittelalterliche Siedlungskarte einiger Gebiete dieses Areals skizzierte, wendete sie seine Ausgrabungsergebnisse, ferner die Dokumentation einiger Kirchenfreilegungen und die urkundlichen Angaben an. In dieser Region finden archäologische topographische Arbeiten mit kleineren und größeren Unterbrechungen ab 1977 statt, ferner außer den Details mehrerer Dorfsiedlungen wurde eines der Verwaltungs- und Kirchenzentren aus der Staatsgründungszeit: Szer erschlossen.

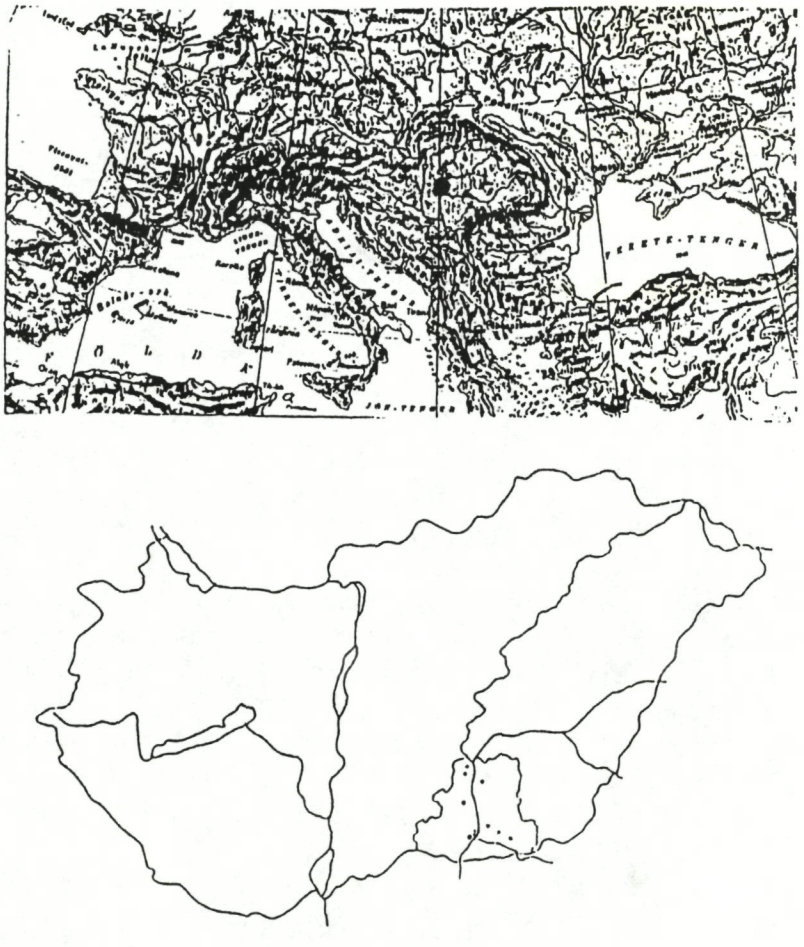

Abb. 1. - *Die Lage das Gebiet Komitat Csongrád.*

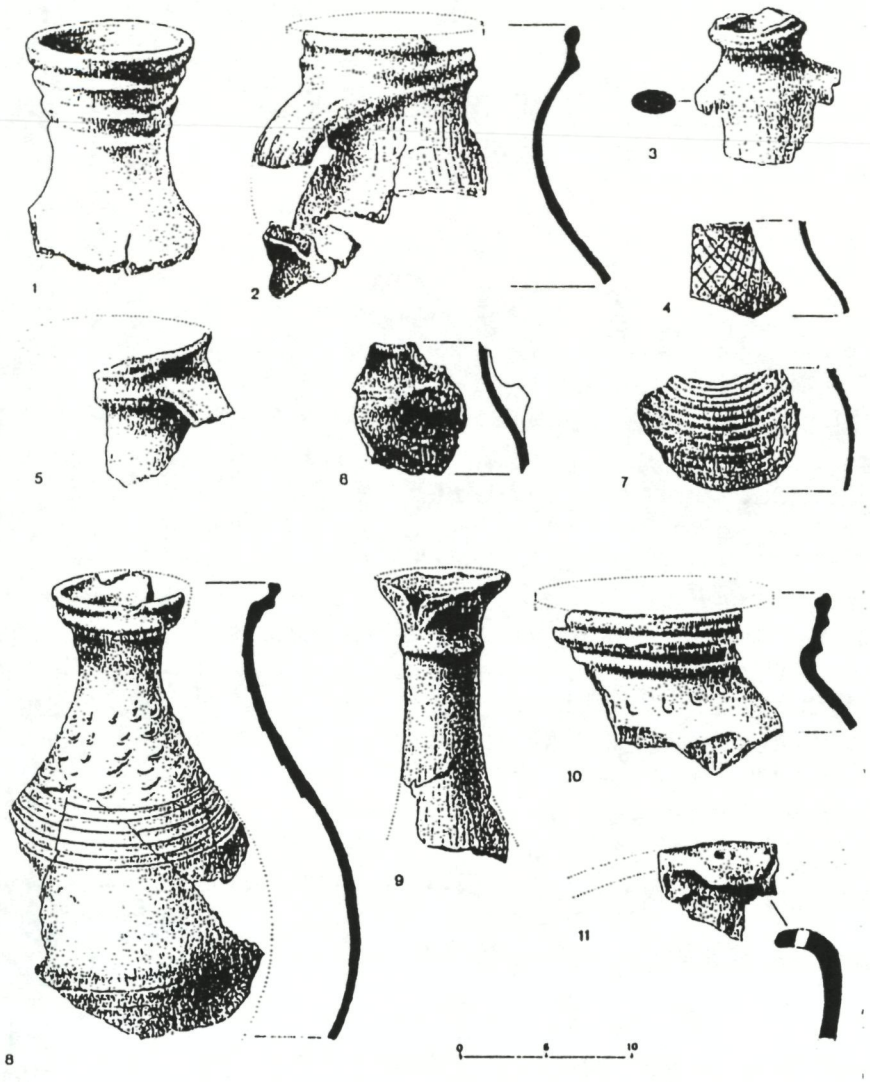

Abb. 2. - *Funde des Dorfes Szer aus dem 9. Jh . (nach Katalin Vályi).*

Zur Bestimmung des arpadenzeitlichen Siedlungsbestandes bieten die regelmäßigen archäologischen Geländebegehungen außer den Urkunden die meisten Angaben, Über die innere Struktur und die Bauten dieser Siedlungen erwarben wir Kenntnisse durch Ausgrabungen und Analyse von Luftaufnahmen. In meinem Referat werden drei Siedlungstypen ausführlich analysiert.

1. Aufgrund von Urkunden datierbare, zur Staatsgründungszeit sich auf dem königlichen Burggut entwickelnde große Dörfer mit einer Kirche. Die Bewohner beschaftigten sich mit Ackerbau und Tierzucht. Solche Dörfer existierten vom 10. bis 13. Jahrhundert kontinuierlich. Fallweise haben diese Siedlungen – in unserem Areal – (bulgarische, slawische) Vorläufer aus dem 9. Jahrhundert, und die Bevölkerung dieser tilgte die Steuer durch spezielle Dienstleistungen (Csomorkány, Sáp, Szer, Abb. 2-3).

2. Kleinere Siedlungen mit Kirche, Ackerbau und Tierzucht treibende Bevölkerung. Über diese stehen uns keine Urkunden zur Verfügung. In der untersuchten Periode bestanden sie kontinuierlich.

3. Kleinere Siedlungen, Dorfkeime. Ihr Bestehen ist nicht kontinuierlich: Zeitweise entvölkerten sie sich, dann wurden sie erneut besiedelt. Keine Urkunden stehen zur Verfügung. Aufgrund der archäologischen Funde und Objekte können sie von der zweiten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts an datiert werden (Tápé, Abb. 4).

Im von uns untersuchten Gebiet (Ungarn, nach der heutigen Verwaltungseinteilung: Komitat Csongrád) sind die untersuchten Dörfer aus dem 10. bis 13. Jahrhundert von ungünstiger Lage, was die Möglichkeit der archäologischen Beobachtungen betrifft: Sie befinden sich nämlich im Weichbild oder in der, unter landwirtschaftlicher Bestellung stehenden Gemarkung von heutigen Siedlungen. Vollkommen konnte die Struktur keines Dorfes – unabhängig von der Zugehörigkeit zu einem der angegebenen Typen – geklart werden, da es keine, die ganze Siedlung untersuchende, komplette Freilegung gab. Darum ist unser Vergleichsmaterial nicht komplett, weder was den Vergleich des Siedlungsdetails ähnlichen Alters in anderen Regionen noch was die Beobachtung der strukturellen Veränderungen innerhalb der einzelnen

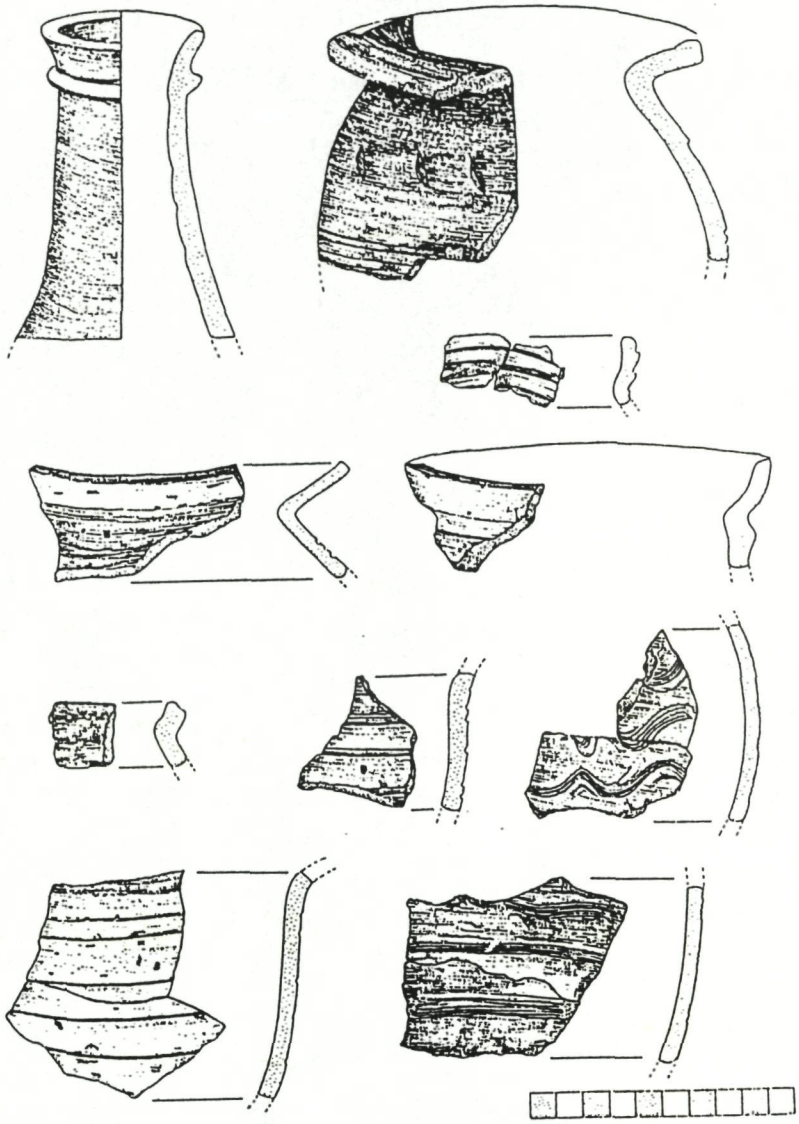

Abb. 3. - *Funde des Dorfes Sáp aus den 9-12. Jh. (nach Mária Béres).*

Siedlungen betrifft. Es scheint doch, daß die Dörfer des Typs 1 durch ein inneres Grabensystem gegliedert wurden. Die sich danach gerichteten Hauser und die umliegenden Speichergruben wurden in Reihen angeordnet. Für die innere Struktur der Dörfer, gehören sie zu irgendwelchem genannten Typ, ist die innere Bewegung am kennzeichnendsten (Abb. 5).

Unter den Ansiedlungsfaktoren der untersuchten Dörfer spielten die Besitzverhältnisse außer den naturgeographischen Gegebenheiten (Süßwasser, Erhöhung, Weg, Flußübergang, Rohstoff usw.) eine bestimmende Rolle. Die Umstände und Ursachen ihrer Zerstörung oder ihres Fortbestehens müssen aber sorgfältig erwogen werden. Die Zahl der Dörfer des Siedlungsnetzes im 13. Jahrhundert nahm nach dem Ende der behandelten Epoche bedeutend ab. Das Verschwinden der Dörfer kann nicht ausschließlich an den Tatarensturm 1241-1242 geknüpft werden, sondern die, das Siedlungsnetz verändernde Wirkung des Wirtschaftssystems kann in den meisten Fällen als bewiesen betrachtet werden.

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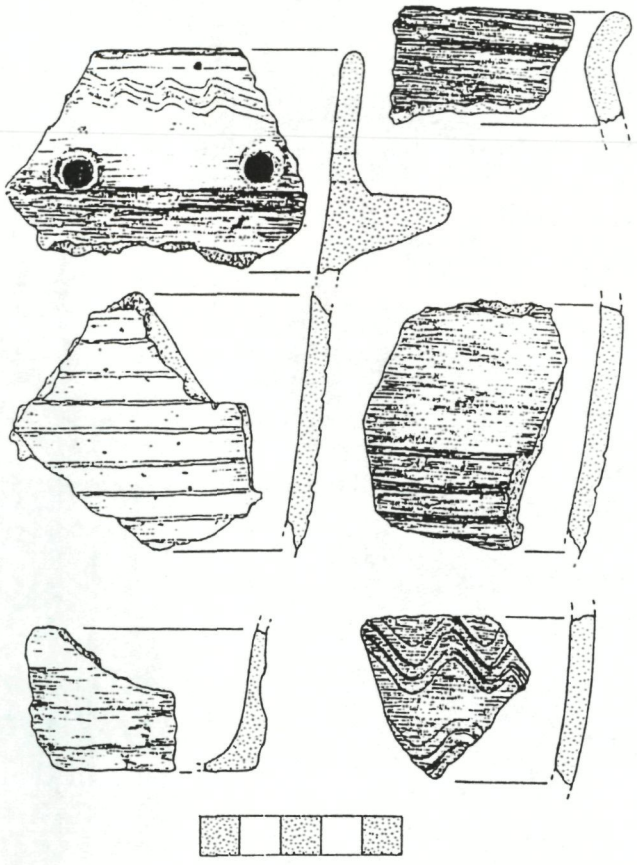

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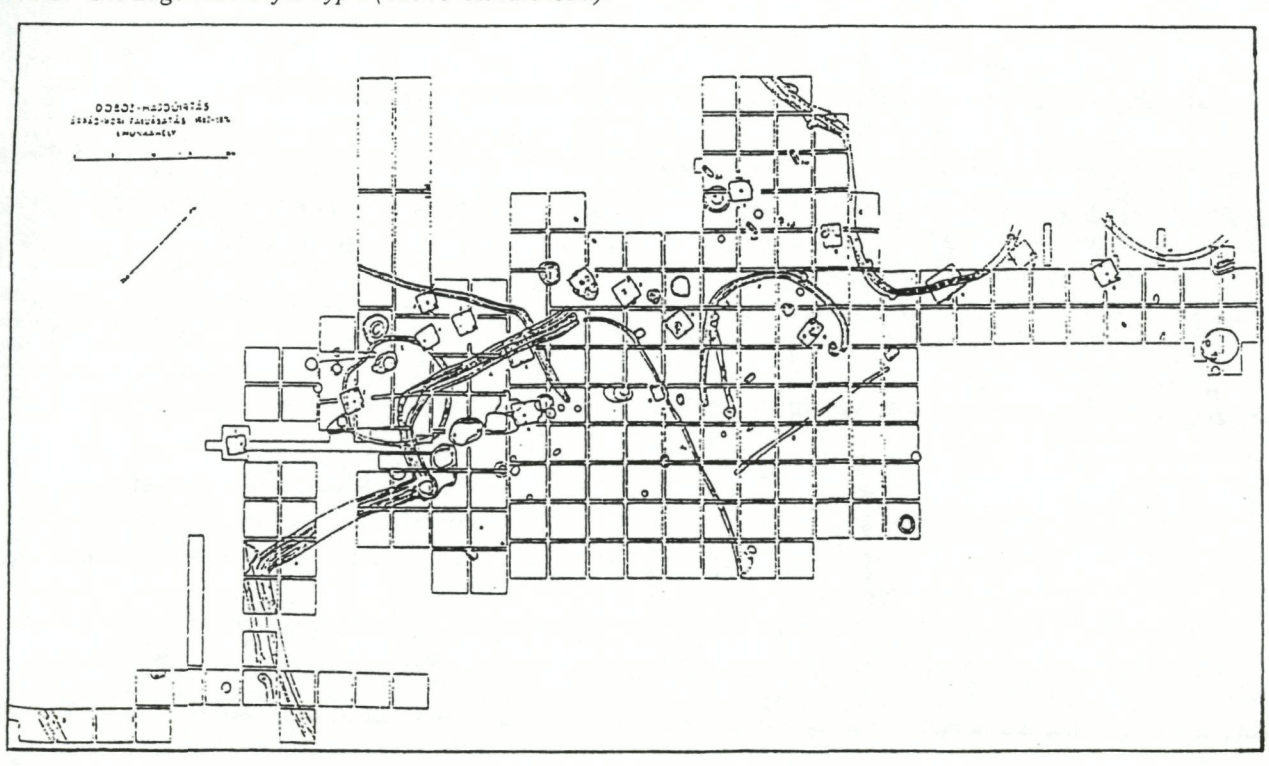
Abb.5. - *Die Lage des Dorfes Typ 1 (nach J. Kovalovszki).*



J.L. Bintliff

The Archaeological Investigation of Deserted Medieval and Post-Medieval Villages in Greece

Abstract

Since 1978 the Boeotia Archaeological Survey has discovered some 300 rural settlements and analysed three ancient city sites through surface study. The Medieval Village Project is a subproject which is focused on deserted Medieval and Postmedieval village sites, combining surface mapping and artefact collection with information from Byzantine, Frankish and Ottoman chronicles and tax-cadasters. This paper will present the various approaches that the Boeotia Project is currently taking to study rural communities in Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia. The accompanying ceramic analysis will be presented by Miss Joanita Vroom in her separate contribution to the Bruges Conference.

The traditional and primary source for studying the archaeology of Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia, a large agricultural province (Fig. 1) in Central Greece, has been the surviving monuments across the countryside, such as the Middle Byzantine church at Skripou (modern Orchomenos). A useful map and gazetteer of such monuments and of excavated medieval sites in the region has been published by Koder and Hild (1976) as Volume 1 *Hellas und Thessalia* of the Austrian Byzantine Atlas Project. In an early phase of our Medieval Boeotia Project our Frankish specialist Peter Lock published a study (1986) of the best-preserved Frankish towers of Boeotia; recently he has published the first modern textbook on Frankish Greece (1995). Figure 2 shows the location of the major pre-Ottoman medieval monuments in Boeotia together with medieval settlements (open circles) studied by the Boeotia Project or recorded in medieval archives.

Monuments that still lack both study and conservation include Post-Medieval water-mills, of which a group of three datable to the 16th century from documentary sources and surface finds has been recorded during our intensive field survey of the Valley of the Muses (Bintliff 1996b). Our project has also made a beginning with localised study of traditional domestic housing, such as the ubiquitous early Modern 'longhouse' (*makrinari*) which our analysis of deserted villages at Rhadon (between Pyrgos and Pavlo, North Boeotia) and site VM4 (near Palaiopanagia, South-West Boeotia), together with oral history reports, suggests formed the typical rural dwelling from the 16th century at least in the region. Some of our earlier work (Fig. 3) on village houses has recently been published by Nancy Stedman in an edited volume on the archaeology of Medieval Greece (Lock & Sandars 1996), but Boeotia desperately needs a locally-organized project, perhaps through schools, to record traditional houses by photography, drawings and interviews before they are all demolished to make way for more spacious modern houses.

Secondly, we have a range of graphic sources, beginning with artistic representations such as an icon representing the townscape of Thebes (one of the two major towns of the region) at the turn of the 16th-17th centuries, and including photographs from the last century of local villages and their inhabitants – but also other regional personalities such as the notorious Dilessi bandits whose like made much of the rural areas of Boeotia insecure in the third quarter of the 19th century. Of especial importance for Boeotian village history are the numerous maps, often linked to the descriptions of both Western and Eastern Travellers, and commencing in the 17th century. One of the most helpful of these for tracing deserted villages is the *Atlas de la Grèce* of 1852, drawn up by the French Army, which marks both contemporary villages and the location of many abandoned villages.

A third source is that of official archives. Apart from state censuses of the Greek state from the late 19th century onwards, and the limited records of Byzantine and Frankish times for Boeotia, the most important archives are those of the Ottoman Empire. Our project Ottoman specialist Machiel Kiel (Kiel, in press) has provided us with the tax reports for some 200 villages in Boeotia, as well as for its towns of Thebes and Livadhia, from 1466-1687, together with fragments from the 18th century. I have been able to localize some 160 of these villages (Fig. 4), shown

Fig. 1. - *Location map of the modern province of Boeotia, Central Greece, with temporaty towns and villages. Modern villages in Sout-West and North-West Boeotia mentioned in the text are underlined.*

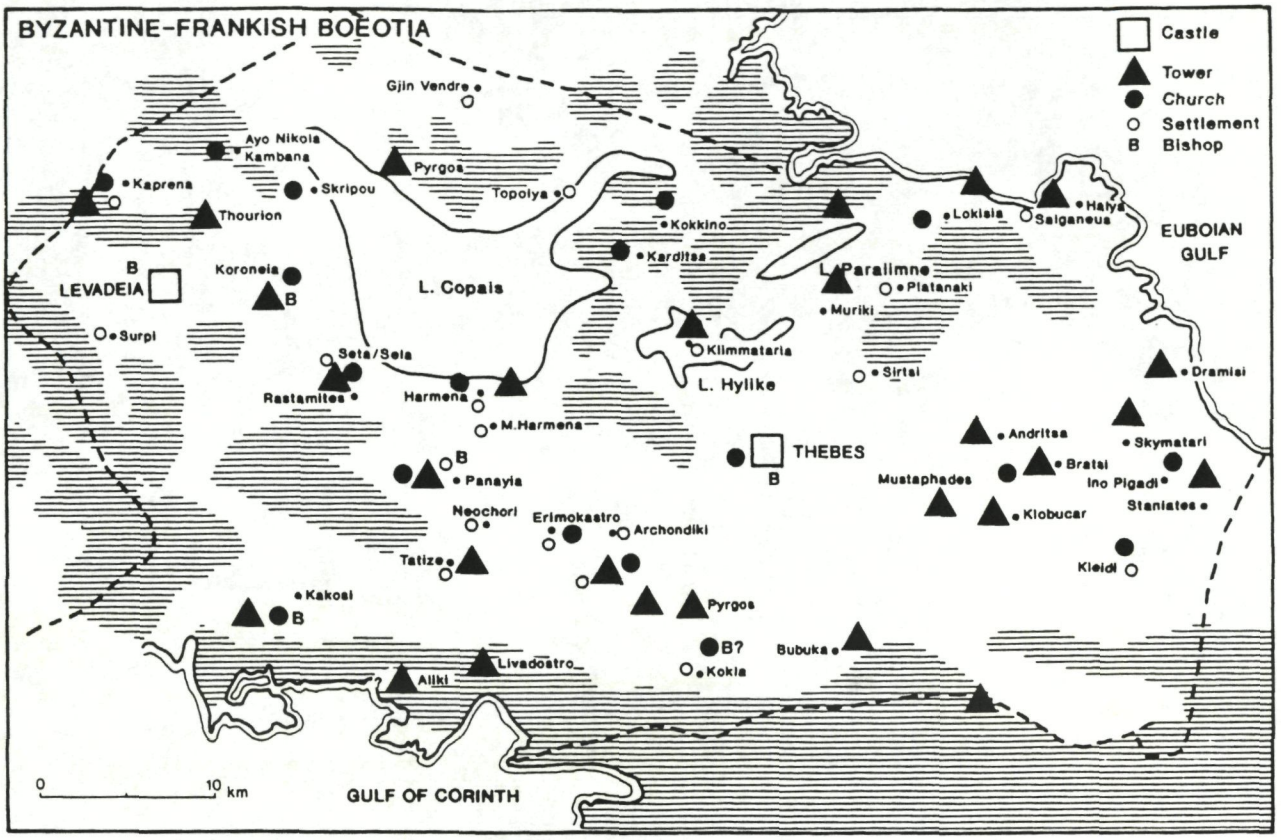
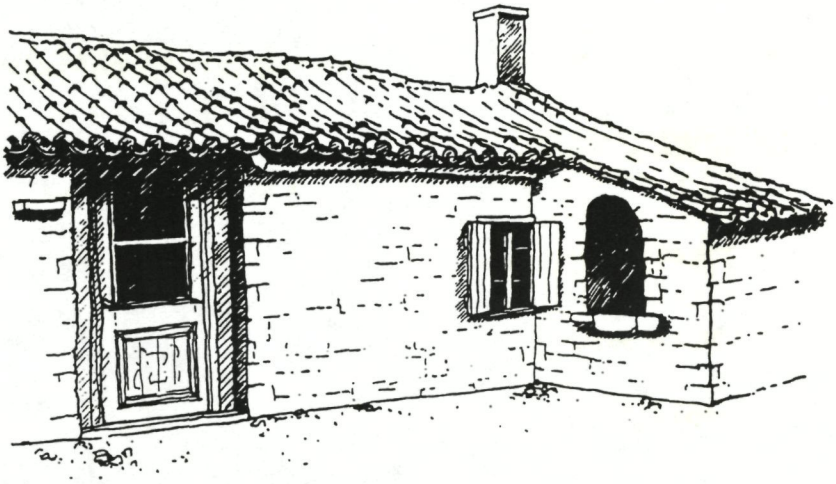


Fig. 2. - *Distribution of the major pre-Ottoman medieval monuments in Boeotia, together with medieval settlements (circles) studied by the Boeotia Project or recorded in medieval archives.*



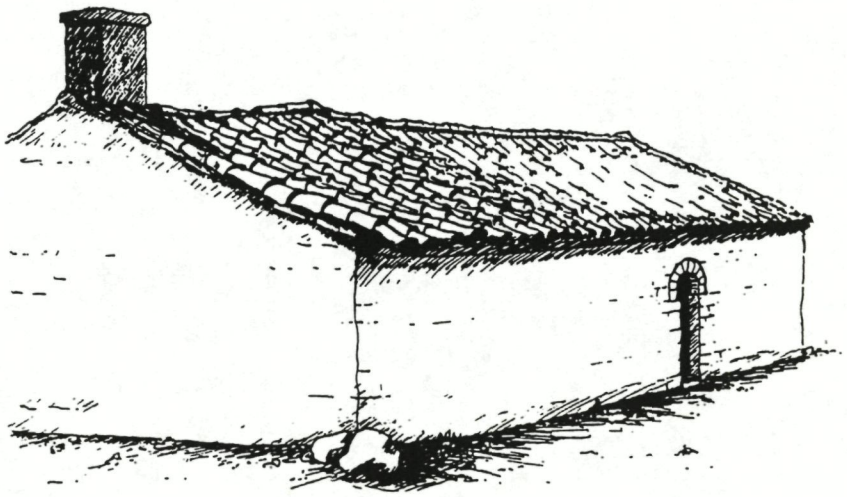


Fig. 3. - *The traditional peasant house in post-medieval Boeotia: the Makrinari or long-house. From Stedman 1996.*

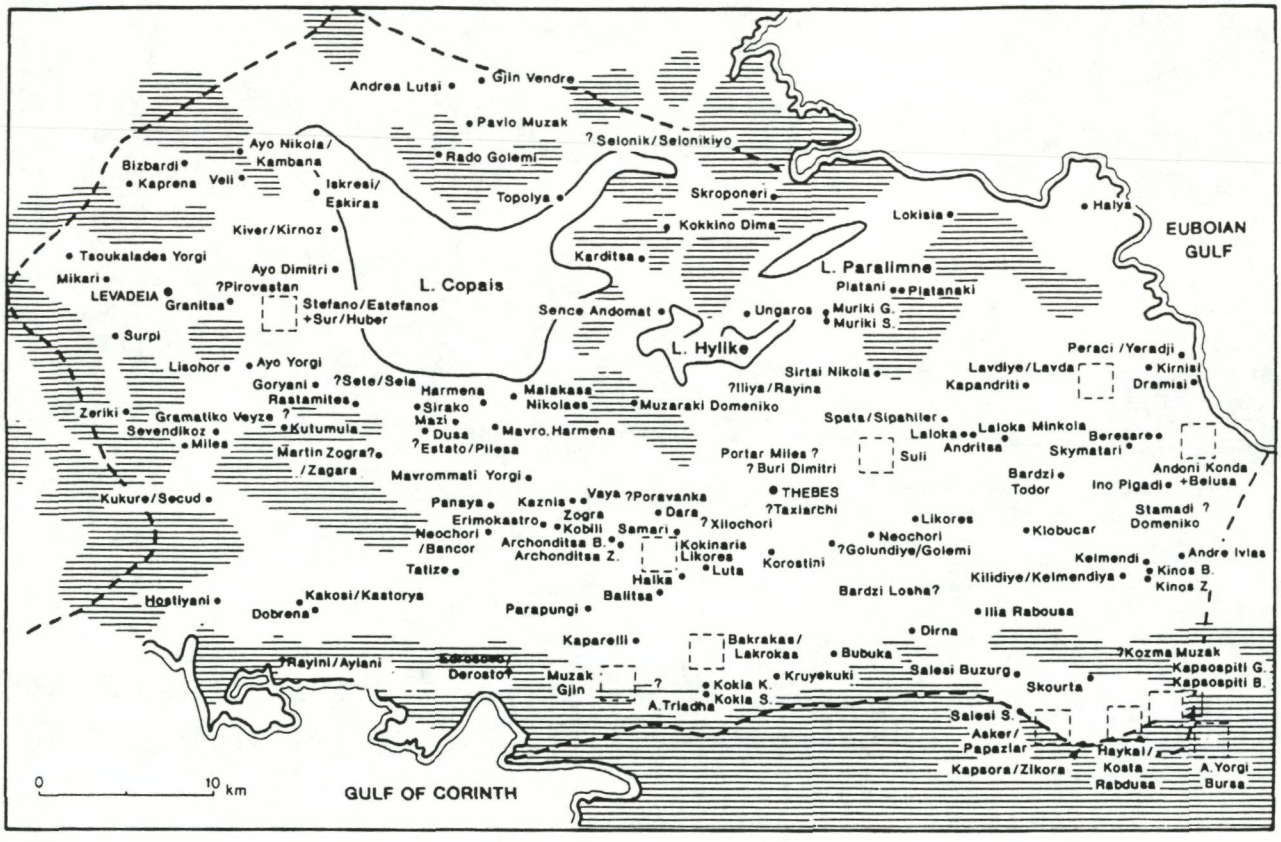


Fig. 4. - *Hitherto-located villages listed in the Ottoman Imperial archive census lists for Boeotia, 1466-1687.*

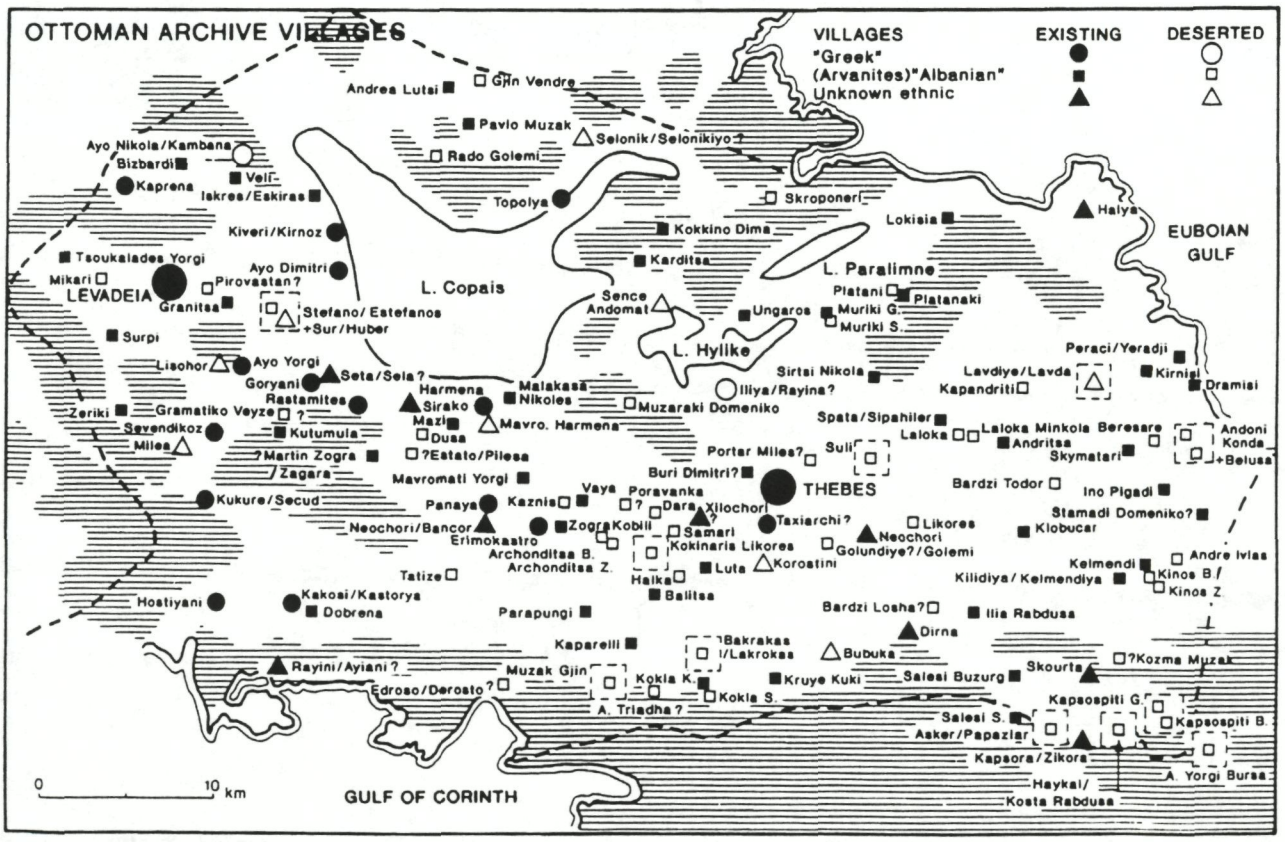


Fig. 5. - *Locatable villages listed in the Ottoman census archives, showing current status (deserted, sitll occupied), and ethnicity in Early Ottoman records (Albanian, Greek, unknown). Urban Muslim population not shown.*

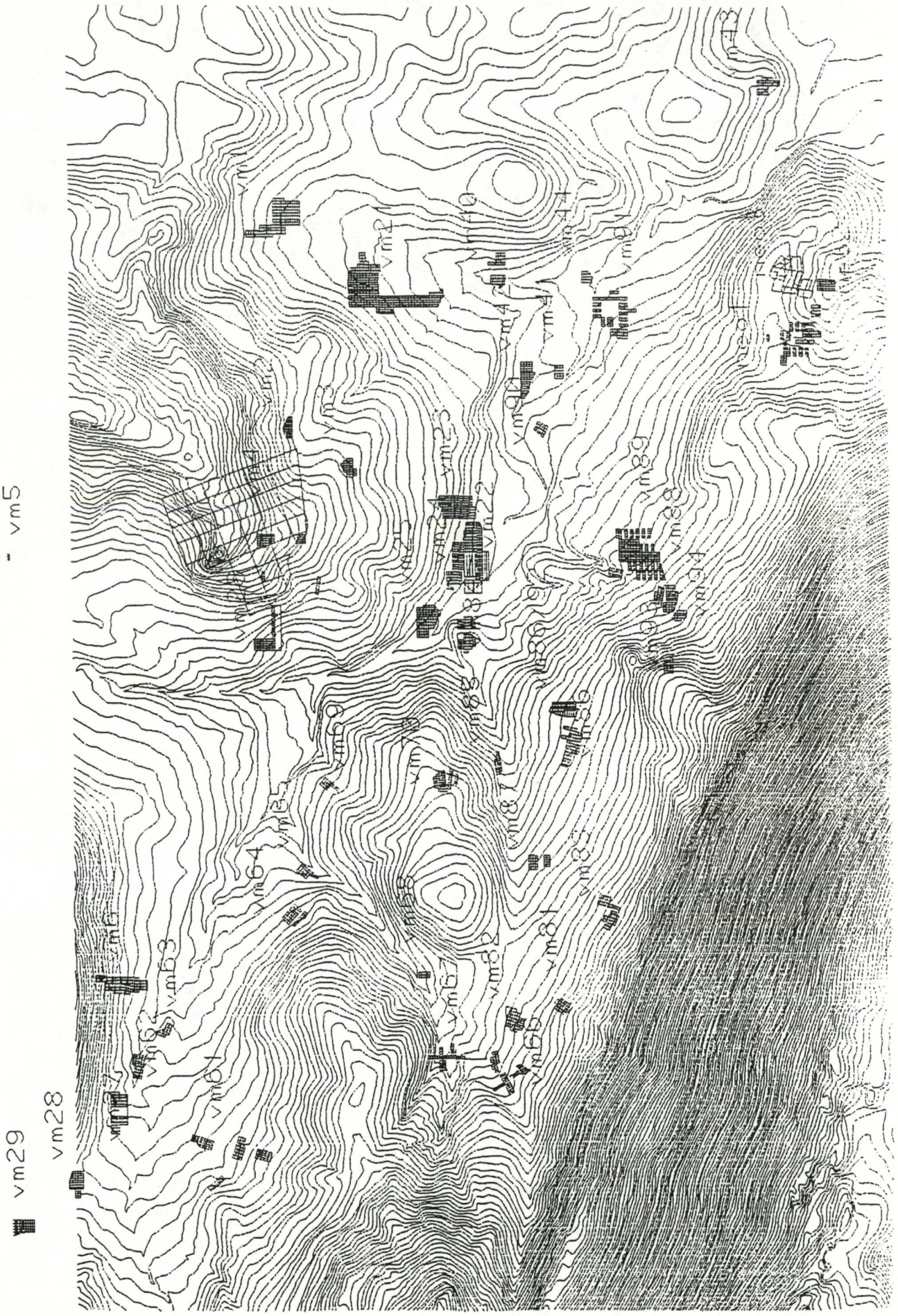


Fig. 6. - *The Valley of the Muses (west of modern Palaiopanagia village, S.W. Boeotia), archaeological sites discovered through field survey identified by sample grids. The largest in north-centre of the Valley is the medieval village of Panagia/site VM4 (11 ha).*

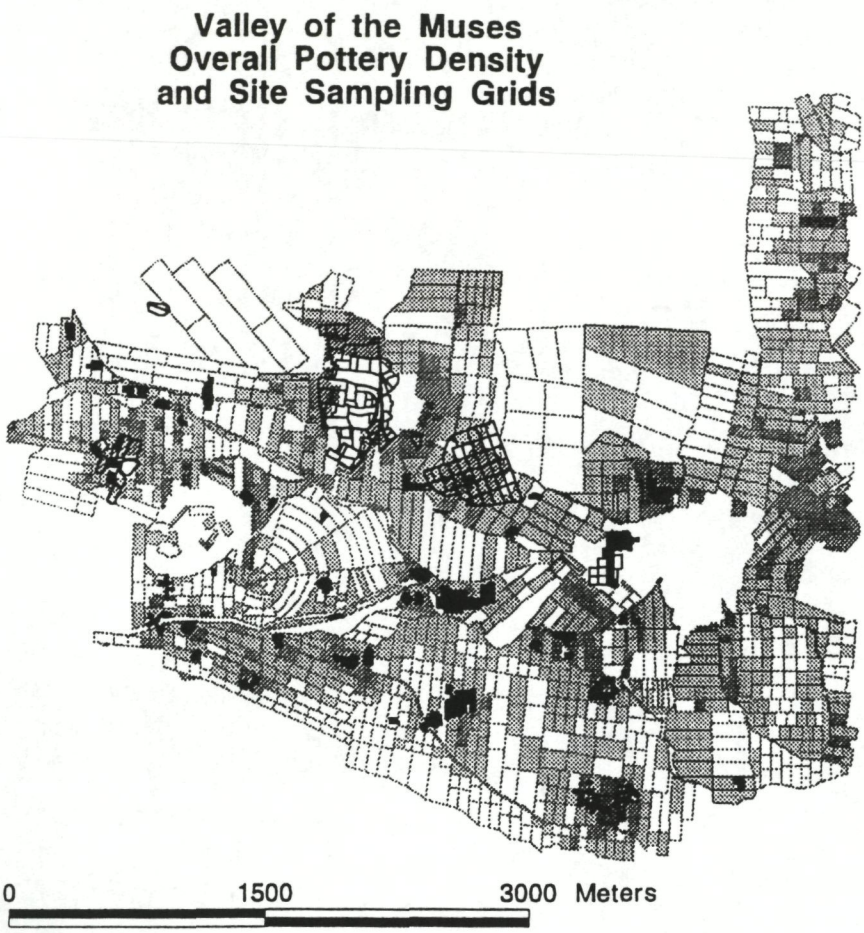


Fig. 7. - *Overall pottery density by fieldwalking transect and identified sites (open or black grids) in the Valley of the Muses.*

The shading scheme used to represent the overall pottery density ranges from a minimum white to a maximum grey

here; only half of these are still inhabited (Figure 5 shows the ethnicity in the Ottoman records, where known, and the villages still occupied today). Those that are deserted offer excellent opportunities for the study of the development of houses and of pottery assemblages, especially as often their date of foundation and desertion can be estimated approximately.

The fourth major approach is through field survey archaeology; the Boeotia Project has been carrying out surface survey since 1978 both in south-west Boeotia, from a base in the village of Mavrommati, and in the far north around the villages of Pavlo and Loutsi (Fig. 1) (Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988a & b; Bintliff 1991, 1995, 1996a, b, c). Such work involves teams walking every field at close intervals, counting and collecting pottery fragments found on the surface. Where concentrations of potsherds or freshly-ploughed up scatters are seen, a grid is placed across the area so that the site – whether farm, village, cemetery or sanctuary, can be measured for its size and date. After many square kilometres of countryside have been covered in this fashion as completely as possible, we can produce maps of past settlement and other kinds of site. In figure 6 we see the Valley of the Muses (west of Palaiopanagia, South-West Boeotia), with the archaeological sites identified through their sample grids; one of the two largest is the medieval village of Panagia/ Site VM4 in the right upper centre of the picture (11 ha). The density of pottery across the entire surveyed landscape is shown by grey-scale shades in Figure 7 and mainly reflects agricultural manuring in Greco-Roman times.

Detailed study of particular periods such as the Early to Middle Byzantine era will begin by using maps of sites datable to this phase (cf. Figures 8 & 9, for the South-West survey block which includes the Valley of the Muses), which give an overview of the density and distribution of population. More information comes through intensive study of particular village or farm sites. Some of the key villages with plentiful surface ceramics and archival references are shown on Figure 2: Neochori, Harmena and Archontiki.

Some medieval and post-medieval settlements provide little for surface survey; the deserted village of Palaeomazi, for example (in the mountains between Palaiopanagia and Evangelistria in South-West Boeotia), is under pasture and shows almost no surface pottery. Only a road cutting allowed us to observe medieval occupation material. In contrast the dramatic drying of Lake Ilike in the centre of the province of Boeotia during the late 1980's and the

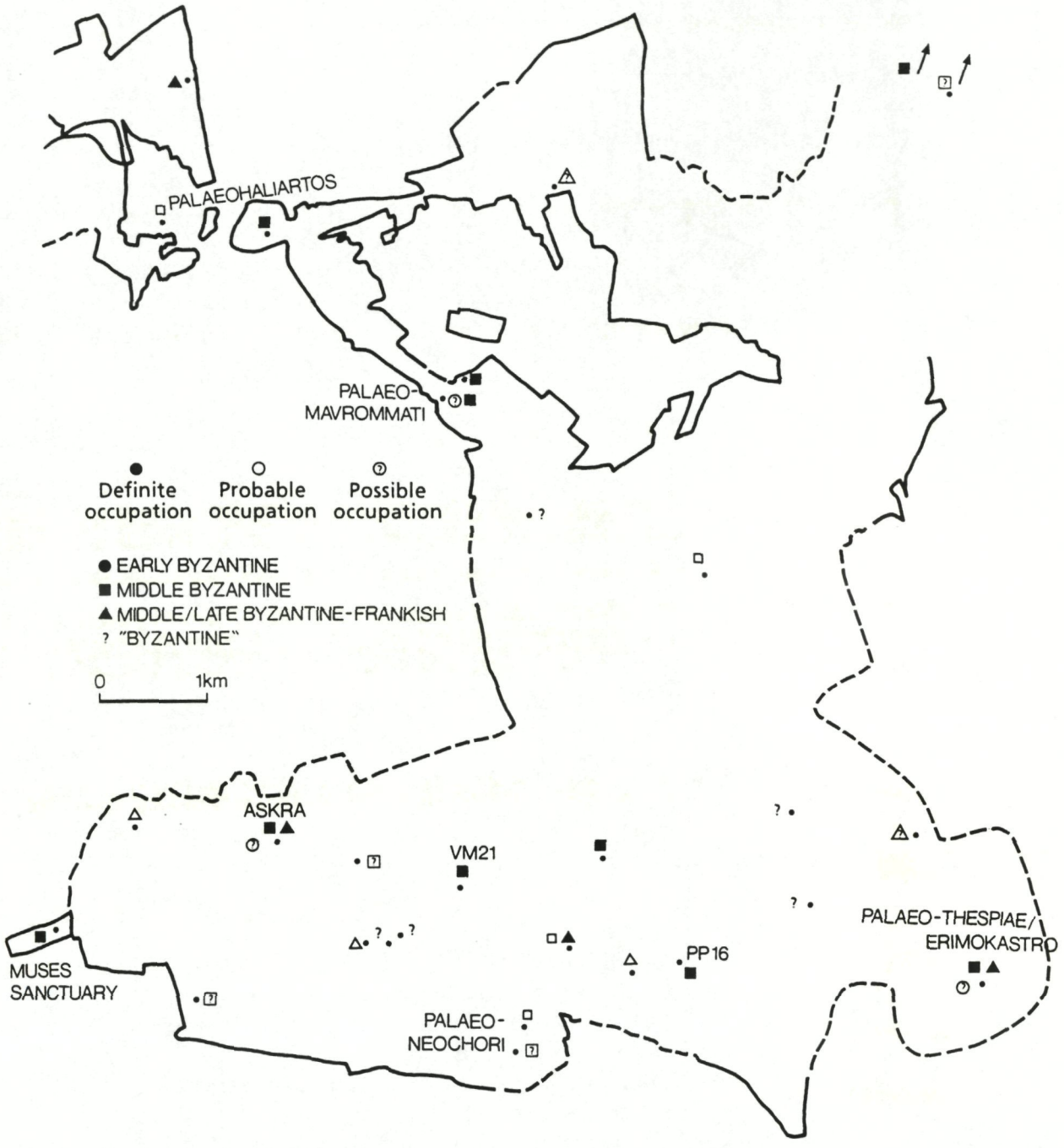


Fig. 8. - *Provisional distribution of Early to Middle Byzantine, and Transitional Middle-Late Byzantine (Frankish) sites in the South-West Boeotia survey region.*

early 1990's exposed a lost Frankish tower and surrounding settlement at Klimmataria (Fig. 1 & 2), where our project obtained a permit to plan and collect ceramics from a site as clean as an excavation. Usually however, medieval and later settlements show no surface traces beyond the occasional foundations of abandoned longhouses and the generally ubiquitous and abundant surface pottery.

The potential and significance of highly-intensive surface survey can be illustrated through our discovery some 500 m north of the ancient city of Hyettos, at the locality of Gjin Vendre (Fig. 2) near Pavlo, of five discrete medieval and post-medieval settlement sites, each one showing a slightly different range of pottery; it is possible that the entire sequence here may cover most of the period from Early Byzantine to the late 19th century. It is the pottery of such deserted settlement sites that is the richest and least exploited area of Boeotian medieval history.

Finally I shall mention some of the major conclusions of the medieval to post-medieval project in Boeotia so far:

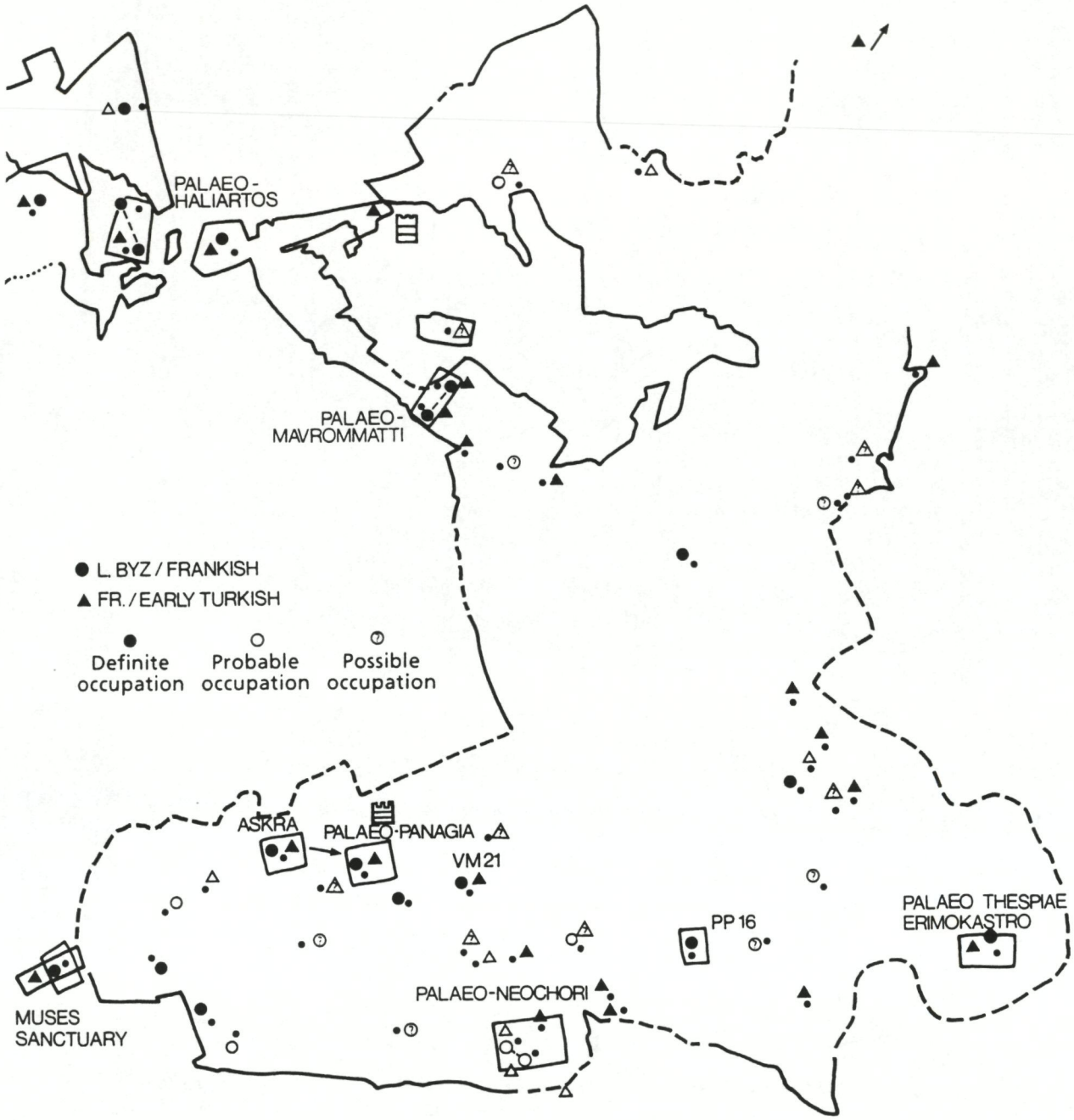


Fig. 9. - *Provisional distribution of Late Byzantine (Frankish) and Early Turkish sites in the South-West Boeotia survey region.*

1. The map of major Byzantine to Frankish sites for Boeotia as a whole (Fig. 2), and our detailed examination of the sequence in South-West Boeotia (Fig. 8) and at Gjin Vendre in the North, suggest that there was considerable continuity between Greco-Roman settlement patterns (Fig. 10: towns {triangles} and villages {circles} of ancient Boeotia) and those of the early to high middle ages. The colonisation of this landscape by Slavs in the 6th-7th centuries AD probably involved a merging with local populations, often on pre-existing settlement sites. Subsequent population growth through the Middle Byzantine and Frankish eras, to the 13th century, remained largely within the ancient settlement network.

2. The 14th and early 15th centuries AD appear to have been a disastrous time for Boeotian settlements. Incessant warfare between the Franks, the Byzantines and the encroaching Ottoman state, together with the impact of the Black Death and climatic deterioration, led to the large scale abandonment of most of the countryside, and a nucleation of population into the two regional towns of Thebes and Livadhia and a limited number of large villages. This can be shown

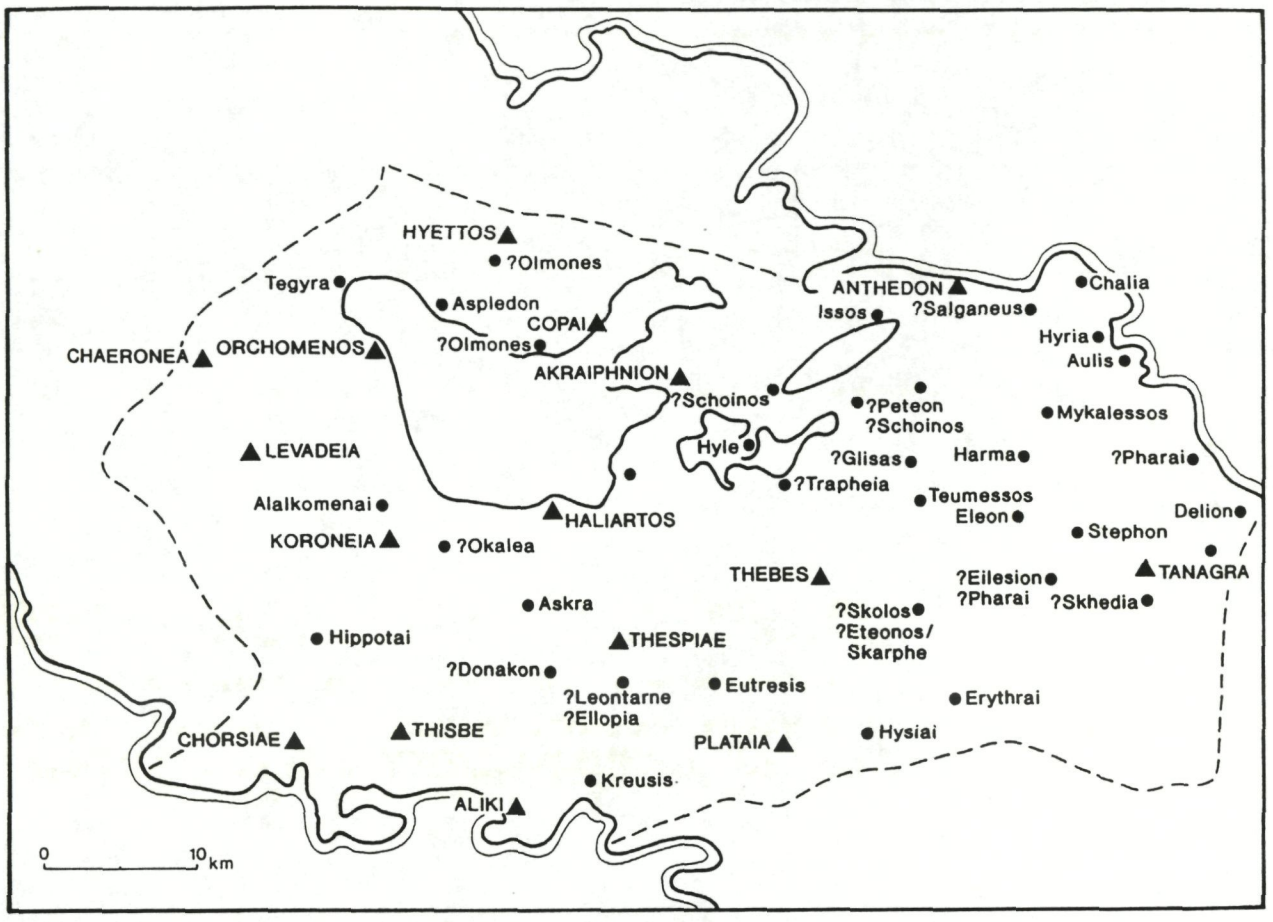


Fig. 10. - *The distribution of towns (triangles) and villages (circles) in Classical Greek Boeotia.*

archaeologically through surface survey of several deserted villages but even more clearly from the first Ottoman census map preserved, that of 1466 (Fig. 11): the Greek villages are notable in their size and concentration. During the final half century of Frankish rule the Dukes of Athens attempted to recolonize the landscape through encouraging settlement by Albanian clans (Jochalas 1971); this was continued under the first Ottoman authorities; the tiny new foundations of Albanians seem generally to have been settled close to abandoned Byzantine-Frankish villages.

3. Under the *Pax Ottomanica* Boeotian populations and economy flourished. This can be shown not only in the census statistics (Figure 12 compared to Figure 11 evidences a generalized population boom up to 1570), but also in the surface archaeology of villages studied by the Project. Thus at the village of VM4/ Panayia in the Valley of the Muses, the dramatic expansion of the community between Frankish (Fig. 13) and Early Turkish (Fig. 14) times is clearly recorded from the spread of diagnostic surface ceramics, mirroring the Ottoman census statistics where well over 1000 people are recorded for the village by the later 16th century.

4. The severe decline in Boeotia's fortunes during the troubled 17th century is likewise documented both at the province level through census records (Fig. 15, for 1687/8), and through the study of deserted village sites using surface ceramic distributions. Figure 16 shows the contraction, followed by abandonment, of the village of VM4/ Panayia which took place during the late 17th century.

5. The richness of archive materials and the extraordinary abundance of surface ceramics of post-Roman date in Boeotia, together with the growing recognition of discrete assemblages of ceramics for each major phase of medieval and post-medieval times (the work of Professor John Hayes and Joanita Vroom), offer an unusual opportunity to bring together historic sources and field archaeology, so that the development of both landscapes and townscapes in post-Roman Greece are becoming increasingly better understood. Figure 17 provides a comparison between demographic change for 16 Boeotian vil-

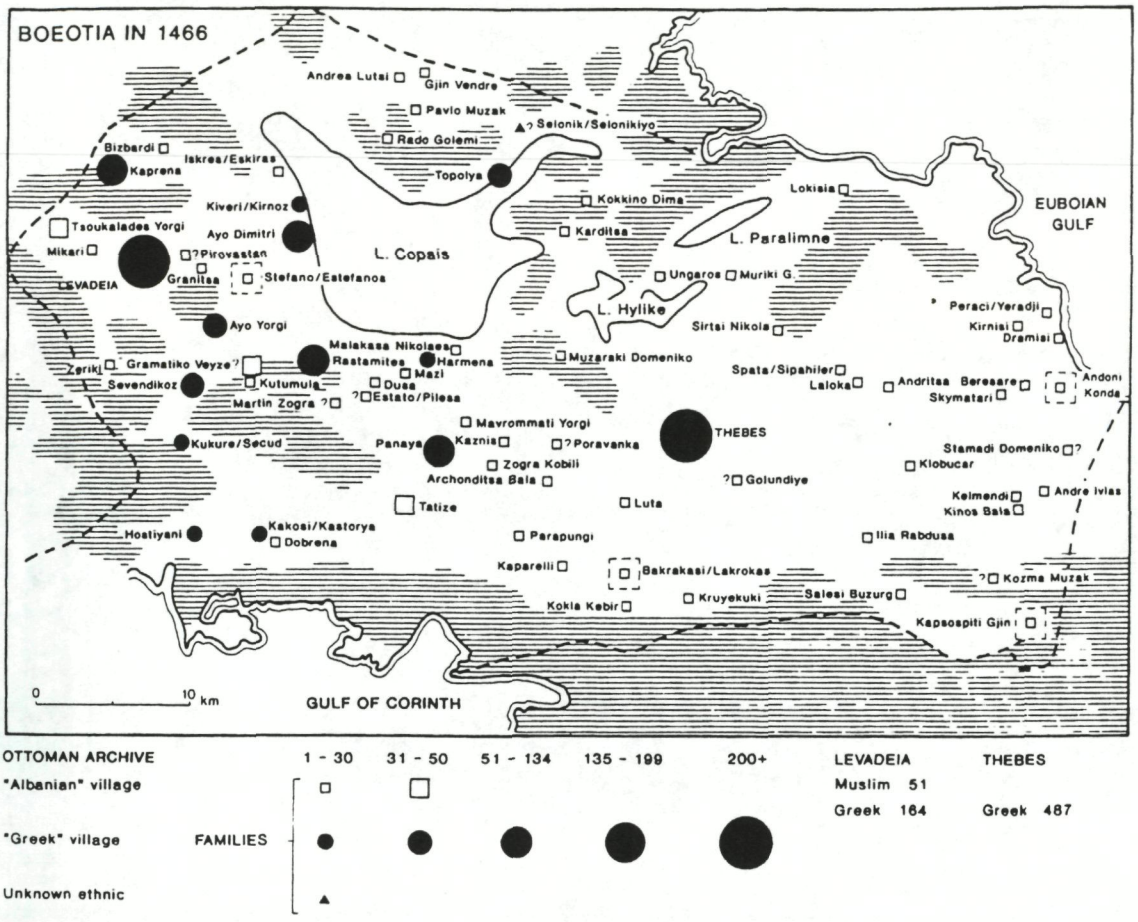
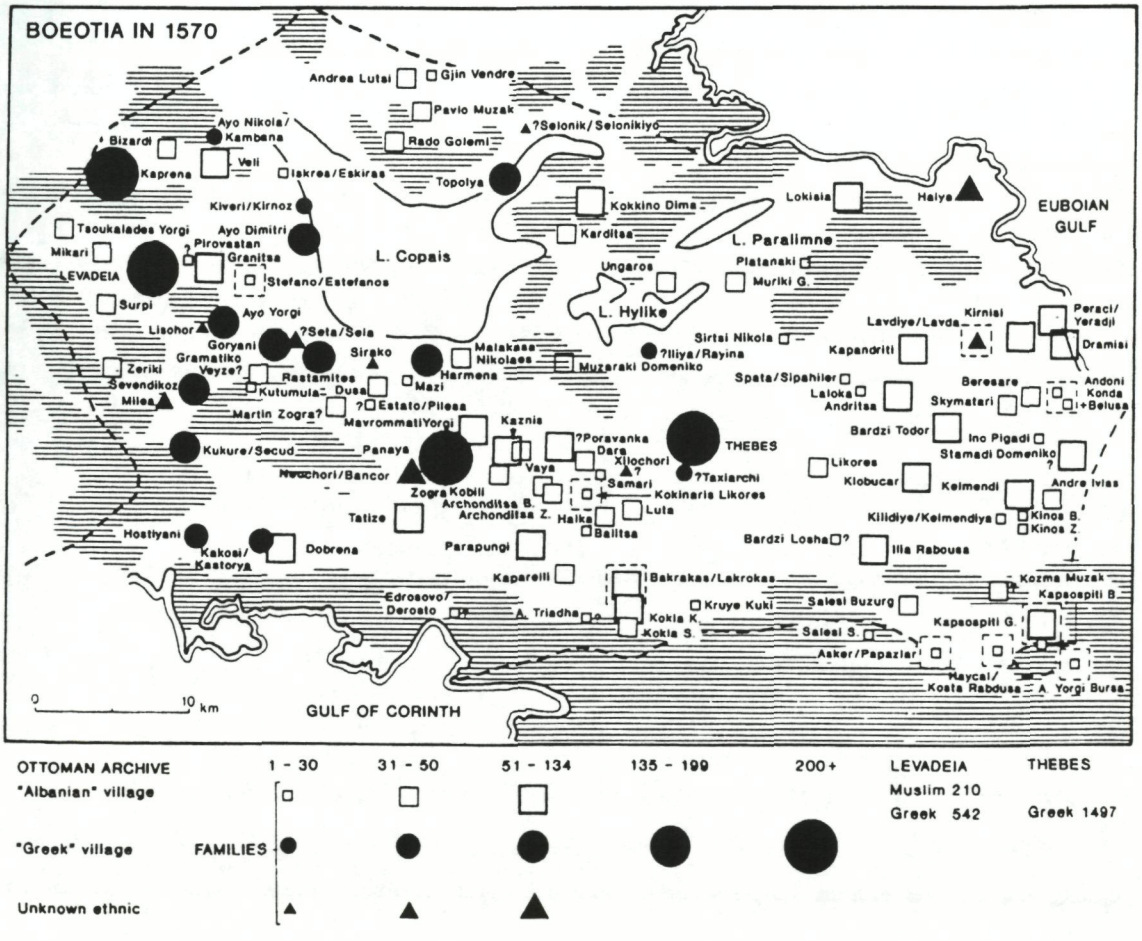


Fig. 11. - *Population and ethnicity in Boeotia in 1466, after Ottoman census records.*

Fig. 12. - *Population and ethnicity in Boeotia in 1570, after Ottoman census records.*



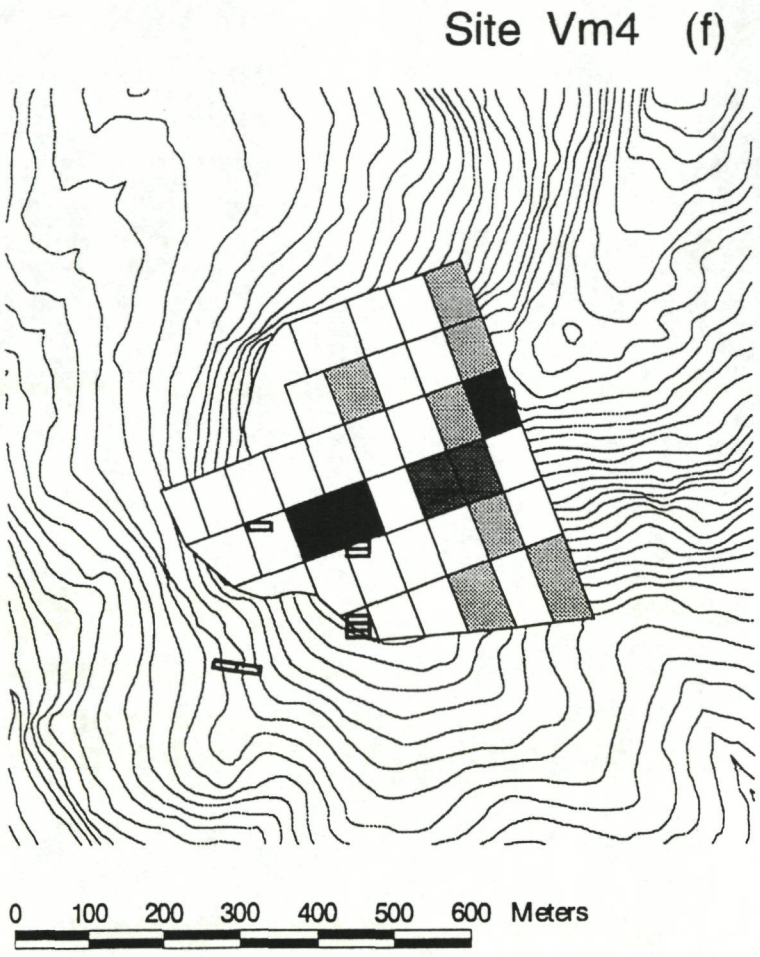
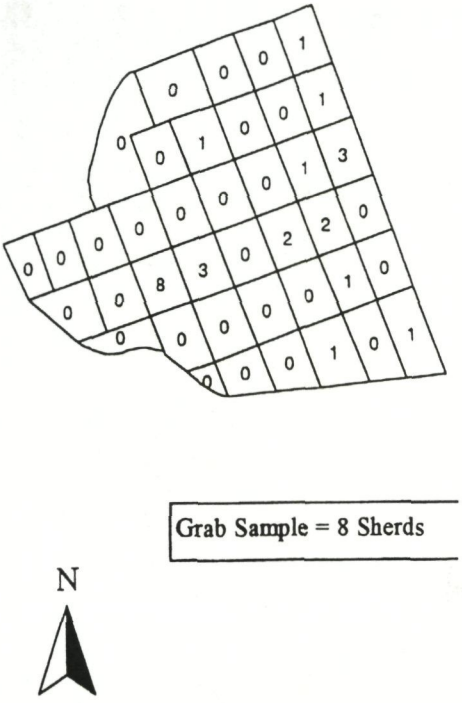


Fig. 13. - *The occupation surface of the deserted medieval village of VM4 in Frankish times, based on surface sherds.*



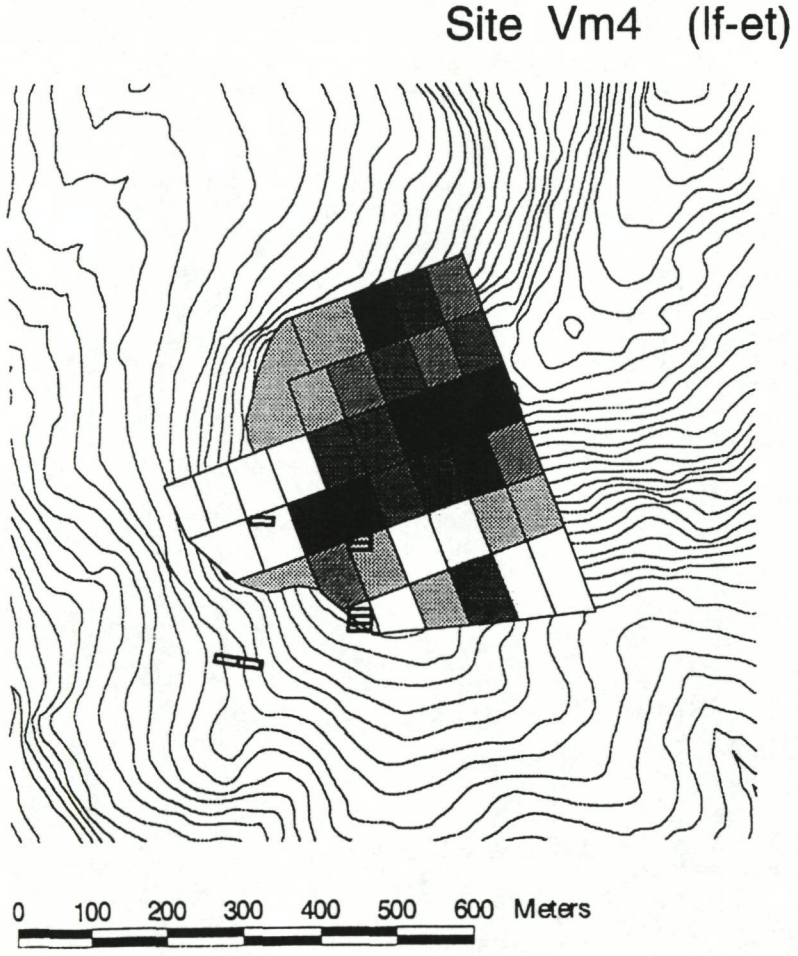
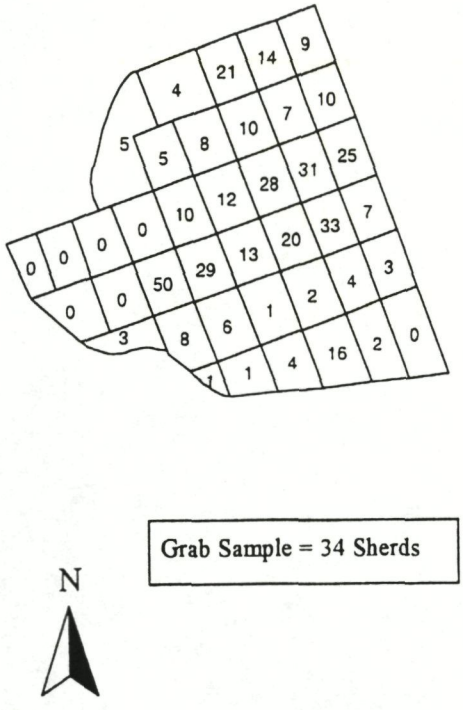


Fig. 14. - *The occupation surface of the deserted medieval village of VM4 in Early Turkish times, based on surface sherds.*



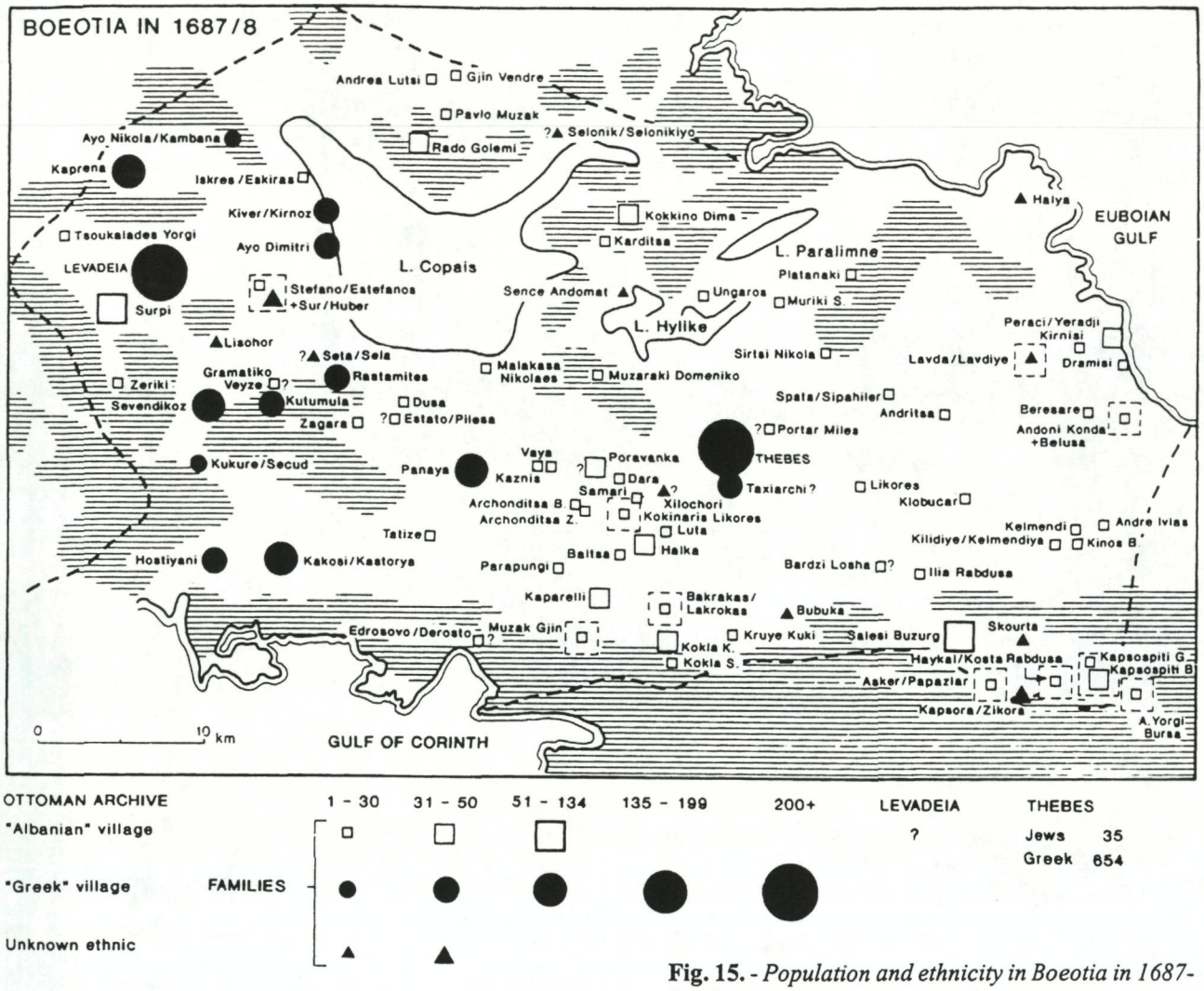
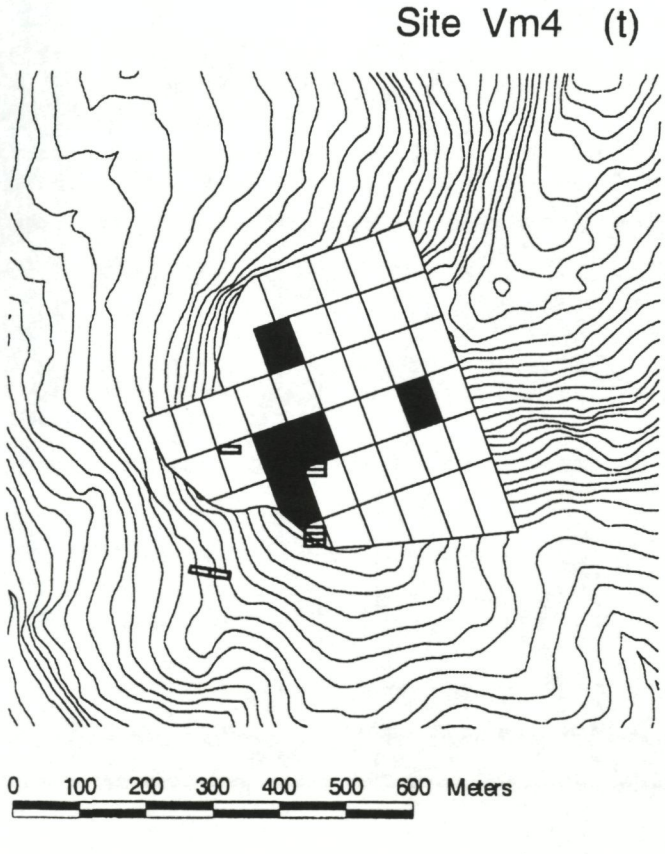


Fig. 15. - *Population and ethnicity in Boeotia in 1687-8, after Ottoman census records.*



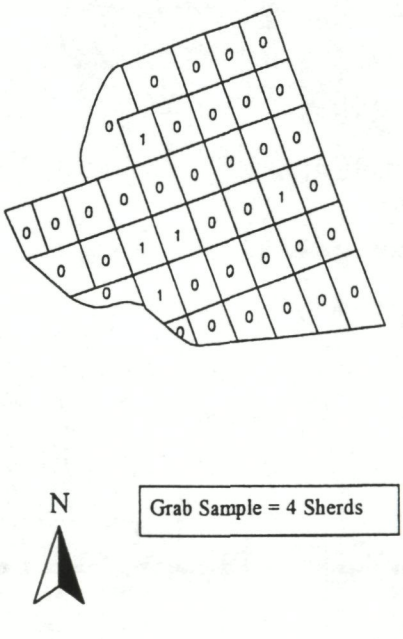
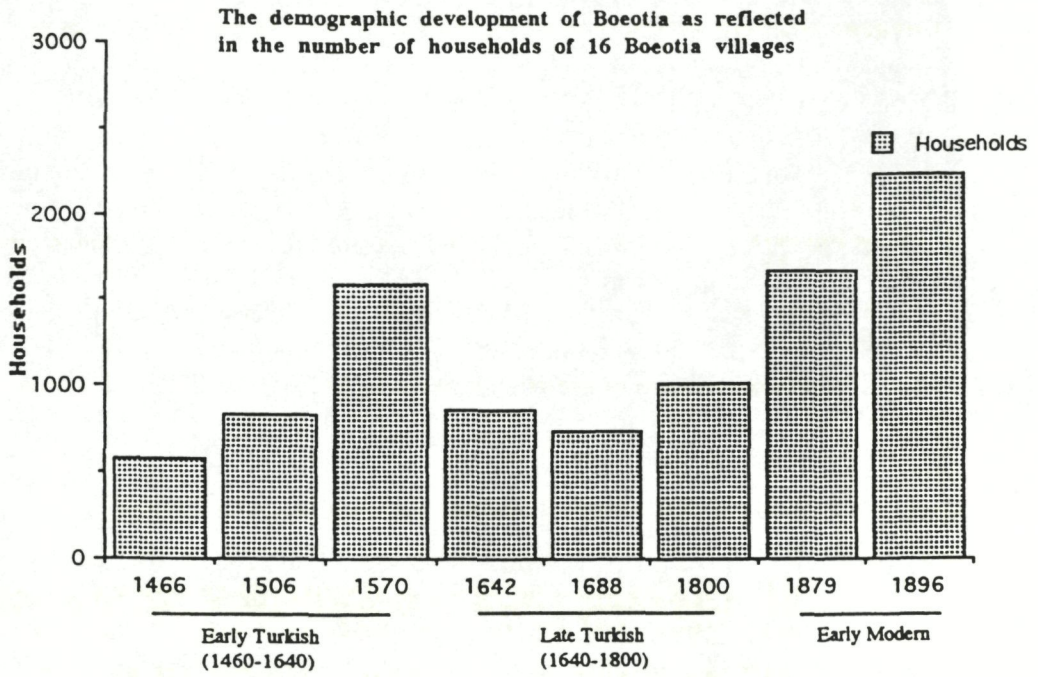
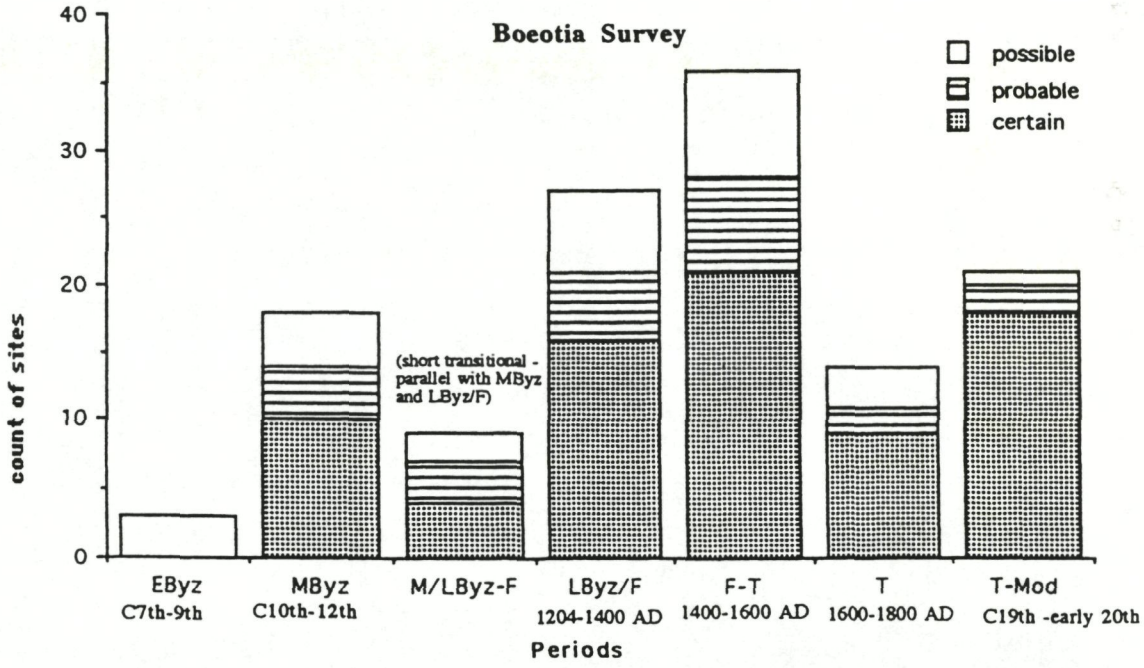


Fig. 16. - *The occupation surface of the deserted medieval village of VM4 in Later Turkish times, based on surface sherds.*





Settlement trends of the Early Byzantine (EByz), Middle Byzantine (MByz), Late Byzantine/Frankish (LByz/F), Late Frankish-Early Turkish (F-T), Late Turkish (T), and Late Turkish-Early Modern Period (T-M)

Fig. 17. - *The comparison between demographic change for 16 Boeotian villages from the 15th-19th centuries (based on research by Dr. M. Kiel) and the statistics of settlement numbers over time based on archaeological field survey in S.W.*

lages from the 15th-19th centuries, based on Dr. Kiel's Ottoman archive research, and the statistics of settlement numbers over time based on the Project's surface field survey evidence (collated by Dr. K. Sbonias).

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Villaggi tardo bizantini degli Iblei: primo medioevo siciliano

La cuspide sud-orientale della Sicilia, fra il VII e l'VIII sec. d.C., è caratterizzata da un insediamento rurale sparso di tipo fortificato, cioè da veri e propri "Kastellia", e da un incastellamento, a "Kastra", diffuso negli speroni rocciosi, alla confluenza delle grandi vallate fluviali. É questo il tipico popolamento che nell'Isola precede la conquista araba e il fenomeno dell'insediamento rupestre: i cronisti che scrivono intorno al 750 d.C. (Ibn al-Atir, An-Nuwayri) descrivano uno scenario di villaggi di fattorie-fortificate diffuse ed insediate nell'altopiano. Nel secolo scorso, soprattutto, i resti di questi villaggi erano ben visibili sull'altopiano ibleo e Paolo Orsi documentò vari ruderi di case.

In questa area è stato ora possibile non solo effettuare un primo inventario dei dati archeologici schedati ma anche elaborare dei computi statistici sulla distribuzione delle segnalazioni. Tuttavia, occorrerà, ancora, acquisire altre conoscenze sul territorio per tentare una sintesi completa ed articolata delle tendenze di distribuzione ed occupazione dell'area in epoca proto-araba.

La tecnica edilizia impiegata nella costruzione di queste fattorie-fortificate è molto singolare: grandi e pesanti blocchi di calcare appena sbozzati, di forma parallelepipeda, grossolanamente messi in opera a più filari sovrapposti. La pezzatura di questi blocchi di calcare dipende spesso dalla possibilità di sfaldare, in maniera regolare, il soprassuolo roccioso circostante. Ma, ovviamente l'impiego massiccio di grandi blocchi è per lo più costante nelle strutture portanti dell'edificio, in modo da risolvere con soluzioni semplici ma efficaci i problemi statici di questa architettura privata. Cantonali, architravi, piedritti di porte e finestre sono, infatti, messi in opera in unica soluzione con ortostati molto solidi e massicci. Tra l'altro, l'assenza costante di legamenti cementizi in questi edifici ha probabilmente accentuato l'uso e la diffusione di questa tecnica "megalitica". Non si sono ravvisati, tra l'altro, neanche mattoni. Solamente blocchi di calcare accostati, messi in opera completamente a secco, sovrapposti in maniera quasi incoerente avvolte con un doppio paramento litico, ed emplekton all'interno. É lo spessore di questa muratura, certe volte considerevole, su cui si basa la statica dell'elevato dell'edificio.

Sicuramente la copertura di queste fattorie bizantine con tegole cotte, striate sulla superficie, che dovevano essere sostenute da una intelaiatura lignea, a doppio spiovente.

Gli edifici avevano quasi sempre un solo corpo edilizio centralizzato, di forma quadrata, trapezoidale o rettangolare, molto allungata. In molti casi è probabile che la fattoria aperta su un cortile era anche recintata con un solido muro e con veri e proprie torri di avvistamento sulla campagna o di difesa. Avvolte sono presenti dei siloi, per la conservazione delle derrate alimentari. L'edificio era diviso internamente, da vari tramezzi in muratura, in tre o quattro ambienti, spesso giustiapposti e non comunicanti fra di loro.

Tra le fattorie sono spesso note grandi cisterne ipogeiche comuni, ma anche vere e proprie opere idrauliche (cisterne multiple, canali, etc.), come nella valle di Buttino, a Centopozzi.

Piccoli edifici religiosi sono spesso noti in questi agglomerati: si tratta di architetture certe volte molto modeste (con navatine precedute da esonartece) o di vere e proprie chiese di grande impegno costruttivo con ambienti a cupola voltati, come a S. Croce Camerina.

Probabilmente, una concentrazione "urbanistica" è individuabile in questi villaggi solamente in prossimità degli edifici religiosi. Ma spesso si tratta di semplici orientamenti delle singole fattorie che nelle adiacenze delle chiese rimangono costanti. Per il resto l'immagine complessiva di questi edifici è proprio quella di un agglomerato di fattorie disposte in maniera disorganica, senza un apparente coordinamento spaziale fra i singoli complessi. Ogni unità edilizia appare piuttosto autosufficiente pur se sfrutta alcune attrezzature comuni.

Questi villaggi rurali sono per lo più diffusi nell'altopiano calcareo, fra Ragusa e Siracusa, sia a ridosso della costa, sulle propaggini dei pendii rocciosi, che sulla sommità montuosa degli Iblei, in relazione, ancora, con la viabilità tardo-romana che

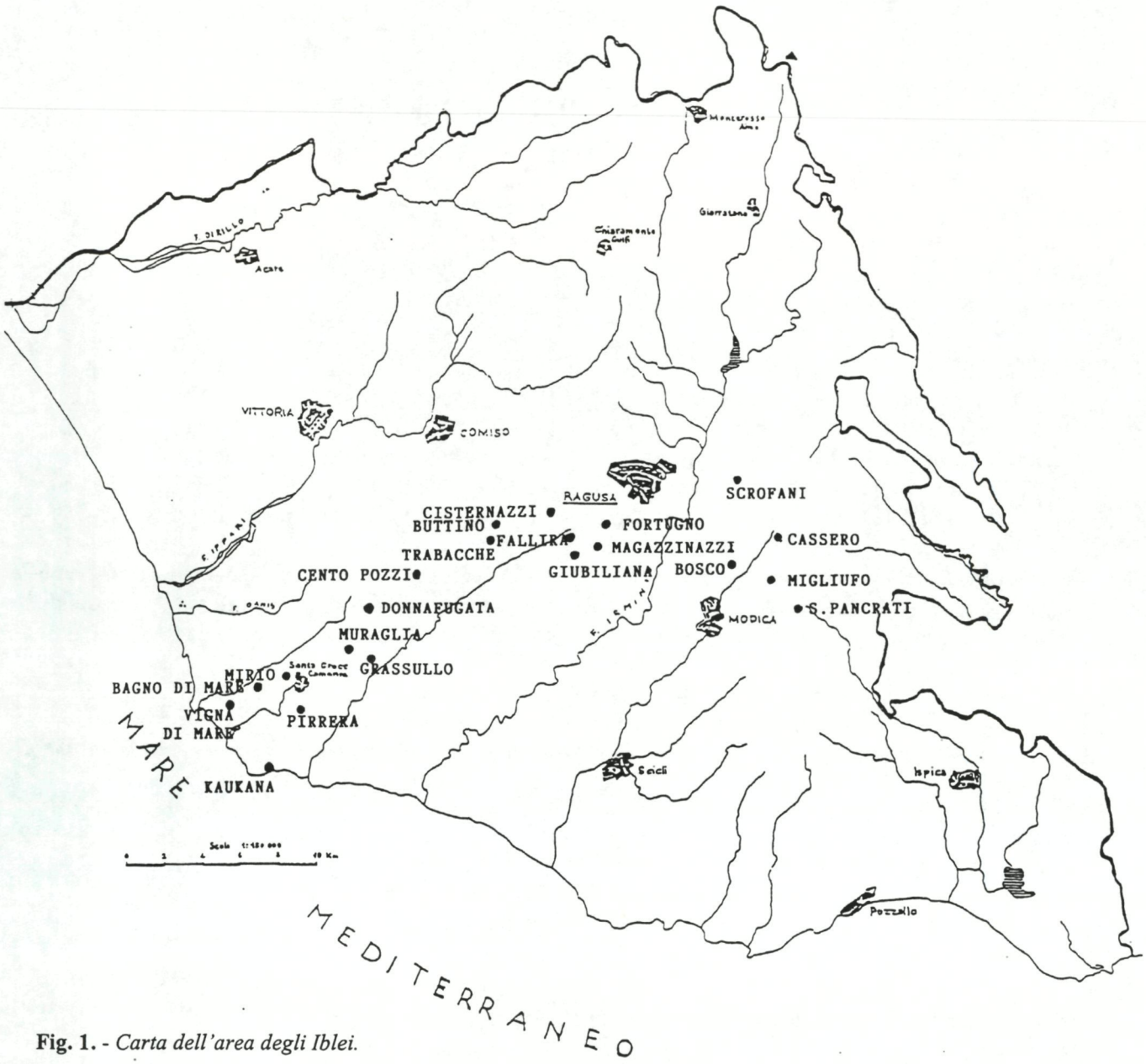

Fig. 1. - *Carta dell'area degli Iblei.*

tagliava la cuspide sud-orientale della Sicilia, da Agrigento a Siracusa, e in relazione alla viabilità minore, ai tratturi, fra l'interno e la costa.

Non è improbabile che nella distribuzione nel territorio di questi agglomerati abbiano avuto un ruolo indifferente sia una mutata condizione climatica registrata proprio alla fine del mondo-antico che una diversa economia.

Un inaridimento, costante, in tutto il bacino mediterraneo è, infatti, ben attestato e registrato, probabilmente dalle varie strutture idrauliche note. L'intenso popolamento rurale dell'altopiano può, tra l'altro, indiziare monoculture specializzate (la viticultura nelle fasce paralitaranee e nei pendii collinari degli Iblei, la cerialicultura nell'altopiano).

Queste fattorie richiamano, per le tecniche megalitche e per le forme tipologiche, alcune fattorie fortificate della cirenaica.

Lungo la costa meridionale della Sicilia gli insediamenti tardo-bizantini si concentrano in prossimità degli approdi, soprattutto vicino Punta Secca, dove è molto attivo l'ancoraggio di Kaukana. Si conoscono circa 25 edifici, distribuiti lungo la fascia costiera di 300 metri, per lo più attribuiti cronologicamente fra la seconda metà del quarto e il VII sec. d.C.

Gli edifici sorsero su un'area mai prima antropizzata, pertanto la conformazione urbanistica dell' abitato non ricalca precedenti impianti ellenistici o di età romana, dando luogo ad un aggregato dalla forma alquanto inaspettata e inconsueta rispetto alla regolarità, tradizionale, della città classiche e romane.

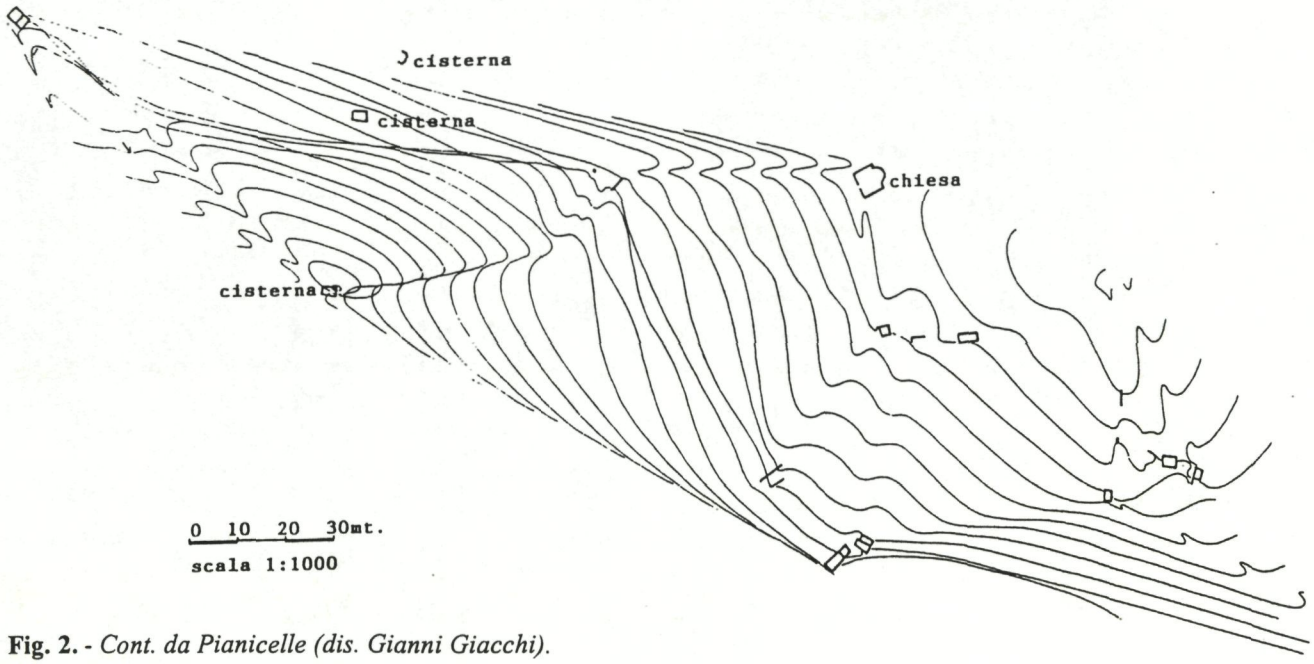

Fig. 2. - *Cont. da Pianicelle (dis. Gianni Giacchi).*

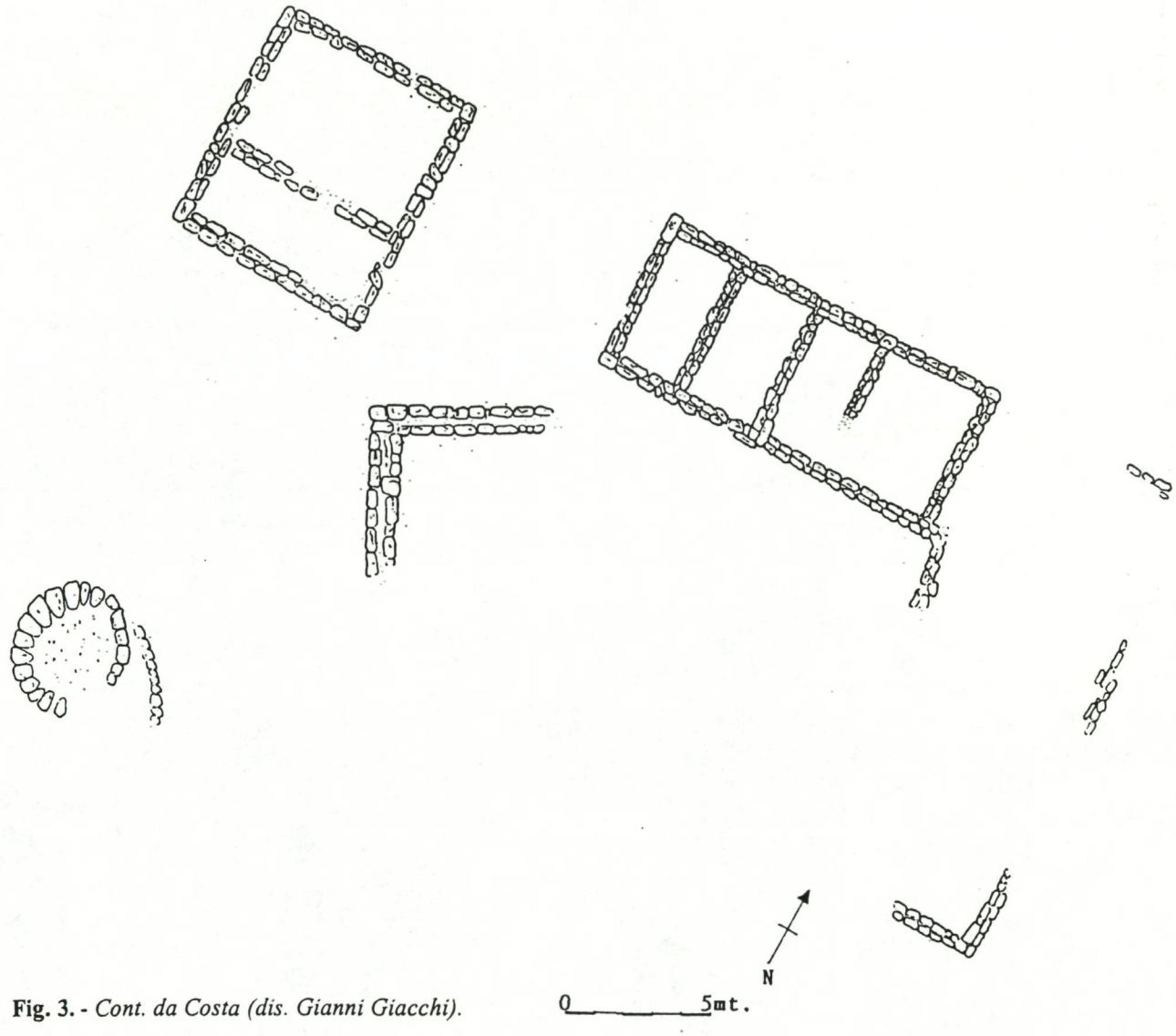

Fig. 3. - *Cont. da Costa (dis. Gianni Giacchi).*

L'appellativo di chorion, con cui l'abitato appare ricordato nelle fonti, corrisponde filologicamente, ad un insieme di case e terreni agricoli.

É stata possibile, una lettura dell'impianto: sicuramente gli edifici 22 e 18 sono due complessi edilizi religiosi. Rispettivamente, si tratta di un vero e proprio convento, sede di una comunità eremitica, isolata geograficamente in una piccola isoletta costiera, e di una chiesetta cimiteriale a tre navate. Ma nonostante tutto, però, la visione dell'insieme urbano conferma ed acuisce l'aspetto d'isolamento delle singole unità, peraltro raramente aggregate.

Proprio in prossimità della chiesetta gli edifici 17, 7, 8 e 2, tutti molto vicini, appaiono raggruppati e in qualche modo in comunicazione con uno spazio attorno alla chiesa. Pure l'edificio 19, tra l'altro apparso no una abitazione, ma un edificio pubblico (un bazar o una locanda?) sembra in qualche modo gravitare proprio in questo baricentro comune.

Forse la dimensione degli edifici è in relazione all'uso degli spazi circostanti: un muro a doppio semicerchio, il n° 2, con una cisterna in prossimità dell'edificio 12, è forse una recinzione, o una sistemazione a terrazze del terreno o il limite di una proprietà agricola, di un'orto o, piuttosto, un recinto per gli animali. Negli edifici più complessi, gli ambienti si articolano su ali laterali attorno ad un cortile, chiuso verso l'esterno, di forma semicircolare, da quale si accede, per mezzo di larghe scale in muratura, al piano superiore

Proprio in queste unità edilizie più complesse sono riscontrabili lunghe file di grandi ambienti, forse dei veri e propri magazzini aperti a sud, su ampi cortili. Avvolte sono giustapposte nella stessa unità parti funzionali distinte.

Appare logico ipotizzare, anche in ragione di queste differenziazioni formali e funzionali, l'esistenza di vari gruppi sociali: contadini e forse commercianti.

Per il mediterraneo centrale l'importanza di Kaukana per lo studio dell'habitat urbano bizantino, non appare affatto inferiore ai coevi abitati dell'Africa e del medio-oriente. Anzi, è sorprendente sia l'affinità "urbanistica", che delle singole tecniche edilizie, proprio con i coevi villaggi della Siria del nord, dell' area palestinese della Transgiordania, o del limes libico e tunisino. In modo particolare si può richiamare l'abitato di Ghirza o i villaggi di Behyo, Quatua e Refeda.

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Quelques aspects du peuplement médiéval du Valle de Ricote (Murcie, Espagne)

Depuis quelques années, les recherches d'archéologie médiévale réalisées dans la Péninsule ibérique s'orientent pour la plupart d'entre elles vers une approche globale des territoires aménagés et exploités par l'homme: aux problèmes d'une nature difficile, où la montagne est partout présente et où l'eau vitale est mal distribuée, s'ajoutent le vaste problème historique de la confrontation de deux sociétés que la religion différencie mais qui s'opposent surtout quand on examine les bases sociales et socio-économiques qui les caractérisent. Deux événements majeurs marquent les régions d'al-Andalus au cours du Moyen Age: c'est, d'une part, l'essor rapide et décisif d'une société fortement orientalisée, dans sa culture comme dans ses pratiques quotidiennes –et le développement de l'hydraulique agraire en fait, à l'évidence, partie–, d'autre part, les mutations lentes ou brutales selon les cas qui suivent le choc d'une conquête féodale déjà largement entamée au XIe siècle (1085, prise de Tolède) mais qui s'impose en deux temps, dans la première moitié du XIIIe siècle (1238, prise de Valence) puis à l'extrême fin du XVe siècle (1492, prise de Grenade).

La recherche, dont on présente ici quelques résultats récents, s'inscrit dans le contexte de cette approche des sociétés andalouses et se place à la jonction de deux axes thématiques reflétant chacun une problématique historique spécifique: l'étude des territoires, comme mode d'organisation et de mise en valeur des paysages méditerranéens, et l'analyse des structures irriguées qui contribuent à façonner ces paysages et à leur donner leur originalité technologique et écologique.

C'est la collaboration –scientifique, économique et technique– engagée depuis plusieurs années entre la Région wallonne, la Région autonome de Murcie, la Casa de Velázquez (Madrid) et l'Unité Mixte de Recherche 5648 du C.N.R.S. (Lyon) qui a permis de développer l'étude du peuplement médiéval du Valle de Ricote, noyau géographique et administratif implanté sur le moyen Segura; l'expression recouvre, après la conquête chrétienne du XIIIe siècle, les territoires d'Abarán, Blanca, Ojós, Ricote et Villanueva de Río Segura[1]. Comme nous le verrons plus loin, le territoire de Ricote couvrait également, à l'origine, celui de Cieza; et c'est en époque islamique déjà, que l'ensemble primitif de Ricote fut partagé en deux territoires castraux: *Riqût* et *Siyâsa*. Sur un territoire relativement vaste, qui mesure un peu plus de 800km^2, le *hisn*[2] primitif de Ricote associe des sites ruraux, composés de hameaux et de villages, et des sites défensifs parmi lesquels figure peut-être le premier *Siyâsa*; les terroirs montrent la présence, dès la haute époque, d'une complexe organisation d'hydraulique agraire. Dans cette micro-région, s'est donc développée une étude des structures conservées à travers deux époques du peuplement: celle correspondant à la présence musulmane puis mudéjare et celle correspondant aux mutations de l'époque chrétienne.

S'agissant du territoire primitif de Ricote – incluant l'actuelle zone de *Siyâsa*– on tentera donc, dans les pages suivantes, de donner une description des données archéologiques qui ont pu, à ce jour, être recueillies, puis de présenter une première et encore très incomplète étude du territoire de Cieza, en insistant –car c'est là l'objet de recherches récentes– sur la vallée du Río Segura et les terres irriguées qui la jalonnent.

1 Le fleuve, la montagne et l'homme

Dans la zone de Cieza / Ricote, le Río Segura passe à travers un paysage de montagne méditerra-

[1] Rodríguez Llopis 1988, 26-27. Sur la signification de *valle* ou de *vall*, voir, s'agissant de la région voisine de Valence, Bazzana 1992, 159-162. Le valle de Ricote forme, lui aussi, un ensemble géographiquement cohérent, un espace naturellement délimité par un encadrement montagneux qui suit le fleuve Segura et qui se referme, au nord et au sud, par deux goulots rocheux où des fortifications médiévales contrôlent la voie de passage; dans cet espace, les principaux noyaux du peuplement (entre autres, les villes et les villages actuels) se rassemblent sous un nom unique qui correspond sans doute à celui de la structure castrale primitive.

[2] *hisn* (pl. *husûn*): une fortification et son territoire castral.

néenne, paysage fort accidenté, parsemé, dans la vallée, de buttes témoins. Le fleuve est encastré entre les sierras. Dans le paysage, apparaissent divers éléments physiques visibles, comme les châteaux, les hameaux, etc..., d'autres éléments venant de l'archéologie agraire: parcellaires anciens, sites particuliers, comme le grenier d'Abarán. Les structures hydrauliques font naturellement partie des éléments archéologiques que l'on peut reconnaître dans le paysage rural: sources aménagées, barrages, canaux d'irrigation, machines hydrauliques, etc., marquent non seulement le développement historique des systèmes d'irrigation agraire mais aussi l'évolution de l'usage des terres dans l'agriculture régionale; l'examen archéographique de ces éléments permet en même temps certaines interprétations chronologiques. D'autres données sont plus discrètes, ainsi les informations exploitables sur les limites des territoires anciens qu'il faut chercher dans une assez longue histoire.

A. Peuplement et territoire

Dans le monde rural médiéval, le village peut être défini comme le regroupement d'hommes et de femmes au sein d'un habitat qu'ils implantent, autour de certaines polarités qui sont principalement le château et l'édifice religieux[3]. Si ce dernier est, le plus souvent, le plus ancien, on ne dispose malheureusement que très rarement de renseignements sur la date de son apparition; en général, il faut attendre la création de l'autre point d'ancrage du village qu'est le château pour qu'on soit assuré de l'existence du village qui, normalement, l'accompagne: c'est, en effet, la mise en place des cadres de pouvoir –donc de la structure bâtie qui en abrite les détenteurs ou les représentants– qui marque habituellement la dernière étape du processus de fixation du peuplement. C'est du moins là le schéma le plus commun, celui que des fouilles archéologiques récentes viennent en partie remettre en cause; il arrive, en effet, que des groupements d'hommes soient antérieurs à la création du premier édifice religieux et du château. Sans doute, les réalités sont-elles différentes en milieu chrétien –où l'église paroissiale est édifiée sous le contrôle des autorités religieuses ou laïques– et en milieu islamique: là, l'émergence de la mosquée se révèle plus spontanée.

Pour l'archéologue qui analyse prioritairement les vestiges matériels, il est très difficile d'identifier le processus "d'encellulement" –pour employer la terminologie de Robert Fossier[4]– qui conduit au village: pour que le village existe véritablement, il faut, au-delà des aspects matériels analysables, que s'y établisse un "état d'esprit villageois"; or, on sait bien, avec Adriaan Verhulst, que la "définition large du village dépasse l'approche archéologique et rend difficile l'application de celle-ci en dehors des éléments purement matériels et géographiques"[5]. Dès lors, que peut donc faire l'archéologue, sinon se limiter à démontrer l'existence d'un habitat –plus que d'un "village"– et des pôles d'attraction que sont, dans le monde chrétien, l'église et le château, et à dater les évolutions perceptibles? En terre d'Islam, la problématique reste globalement la même, accordée cependant, dans le cadre d'al-Andalus, aux caractères d'une société non féodale: ainsi, "château" sera pris non dans son sens de résidence fortifiée privée, mais dans celui de *hisn*, c'est-à-dire de fortification (parfois simple refuge) contrôlant un territoire castral organisé et exploité par la communauté rurale.

B. Les grandes unités du paysage

S'agissant des paysages, on distingue nettement les terres de *regadío* du fond de vallée formant la *huerta* –un véritable jardin dans lequel les arbres fruitiers dominent– tandis que, plus haut, sur les terres de *secano*, ou terres d'agriculture sèche, se cultivaient traditionnellement les céréales et la vigne. Prise dans le sens transversal, au Moyen Age la vallée se structure du fleuve à la ligne des crêtes par la succession des éléments suivants: zones humides de fond de vallée, terres de *regadío*, les terres irriguées, ligne des *acequias* islamiques, habitats, terres de *secano* (d'extension relativement faible), pâturages de versants et de montagne, monte et garrigues. Ce sont là, présenté d'une autre manière les trois éléments habituels du système agraire andalous[6], et en général méditerranéen:

- les terres de parcours –vastes terrains de pâturage recouvrant les zones montagneuses, vers lesquelles conduisaient les drailles et qui produisent le bois pour la construction et les chantiers navals, le sparte et divers produits d'alimentation;
- les terroirs de *secano*, domaine de la "culture sèche", de l'arboriculture et des céréales;
- enfin les terroirs de *regadío*, où les techniques de la petite hydraulique agraire permirent une exploitation intensive des *huerta*s et l'introduction de cultures d'origine orientale[7].

Pour sa part, l'implantation du peuplement se dessine schématiquement comme la juxtaposition

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3 Pour le monde rural chrétien, voir les développements que consacre à cette notion J.-M. Pesez 1992.

4 Fossier 1992, 207-208.

5 Verhulst 1992, 10.

6 Perez Picazo & Lemeunier s.d., 67-68.

7 Bolens 1990, 9-29.

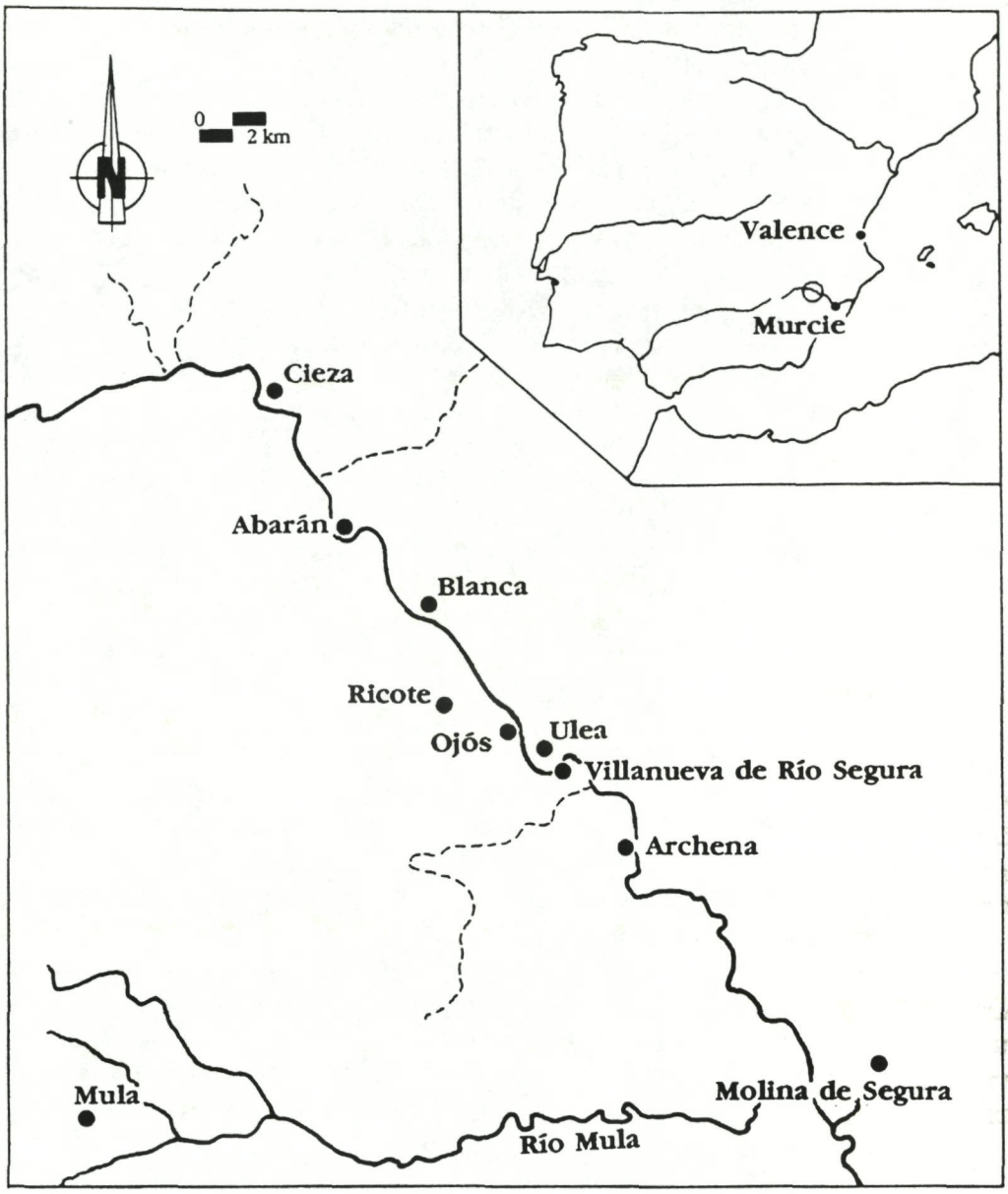

Fig. 1. - *Localisation du Valle de Ricote.*

d'une série de grandes cellules, composées chacune de trois unités[8]:

- le centre comporte le château et un noyau de peuplement généralement fortifié, et appelé en époque chrétienne *villa*: ce terme renvoie non seulement à la réalité matérielle du château, mais surtout à la capacité défensive de la population, protégée par son enceinte; celle-ci enveloppe un habitat fortifié mais, surtout, une société consciente de sa cohésion et de plus en plus indépendante du noyau castral;
- une zone étroite de culture est pratiquement limitée aux secteurs de *regadío*; dans la *huerta* de Cieza, abandonnée au XIIIe siècle mais très vite repeuplée, les chrétiens ne furent cependant pas en mesure de cultiver de nouveau toutes les terres abandonnées;
- un énorme territoire est, enfin, le domaine d'une agriculture pratiquée temporairement et, surtout, des récoltes naturelles; cette zone est parsemée de tours de guet et de refuge, d'où doit être donnée l'alertes aux pasteurs, aux agriculteurs et aux défenseur du château.

Le Valle de Ricote comprend un site archéologique très particulier et unique, pour l'instant, dans le monde hispano-musulman: au contact de la zone de *regadío* et au sommet du Cabezo de la Cobertera (butte témoin en bordure du fleuve), la vallée conserve en effet, les vestiges d'un grenier fortifié du type des *agadirs* berbères[9]. Dans son ensemble, ce site du Cabezo ne présente guère de ressemblances avec les autres sites islamiques étudiés jusqu'à ce jour; les plus proches seraient cependant ces com-

8 Bazzana, Cressier & Guichard 1988.

9 Pour les fouilles et leur interprétation ethno-archéologique voir De Meulemeester & Matthys 1995.

partiments de plan carré adossés à l'enceinte du Monte Marient ou visibles sur le site castral de Uxó[10]. C'est moins par recours à la documentation médiévale que par référence aux comparaisons ethnographiques avec les greniers maghrébins que l'on peut expliquer ces vestiges. Au Maghreb, le grenier collectif fortifié est né d'une climatologie irrégulière pouvant entraîner mauvaises récoltes et disette, auxquels s'ajoutait la continuelle menace du pillage: éloigné de l'habitat quotidien, l'*agadir* ou grenier collectif, est ainsi un édifice où les Berbères emmagasinent récoltes et autres biens; c'est souvent, aussi, une forteresse située en un lieu escarpé. Il semble que les conditions naturelles et l'économie du pays aient imposé la nécessité de stocker et que s'y soit ajoutée celle de parer aux ravages de la guerre; de là seraient nés les greniers collectifs dont la présence suppose des communautés suffisamment organisées et égalitaires, où le pouvoir appartient aux chefs de familles dans le cadre de la tribu, de la fraction ou du village. Faut-il supposer la présence dans la vallée du Río Segura, d'une telle société, tirant ses traditions de celles des "républiques berbères"? Même si la richesse de la *huerta* devait réduire les risques de mauvaise récolte, l'insécurité de la première moitié du XIIIe siècle était suffisante pour conduire à protéger dans un agadir les biens des familles.

L'habitat –groupé ou dispersé, mais non fortifié– des utilisateurs de l'*agadir* était probablement situé entre *regadío* et *secano*, mais nécessairement dans la vallée, entre les noyaux actuels d'Abarán et Blanca, distants seulement de 3km. Le problème fondamental du site d'Abarán reste celui de son origine, vraisemblablement almohade, de cet établissement original: "Le grenier fortifié naît de la coïncidence d'une certaine économie rurale et de la guerre, que celle-ci soit effective ou seulement à l'état de menace permanente"[11]; le grenier du Cabezo de la Cobertera concerne donc bien une population agricole locale – et voisine– confrontée au problème de sa défense et de sa survie, face à une menace réelle ou imaginaire. La céramique paraît dater ce grenier de la première moitié du XIIIe siècle; il fut abandonné au moment de la conquête chrétienne ou, au plus tard, de la rébellion mudéjare de 1264. Le site, en ruine, fut partiellement réoccupé vers le milieu du XVe siècle: archéologiquement parlant, cette nouvelle phase marque le repeuplement du Valle de Ricote par des mudéjars venant du nord, de Hellin.

2 Riqût, le *hisn* et le territoire

La *huerta* du Río Segura, entre Cieza, au nord, et Ulea, au sud, est protégée et surtout contrôlée par quatre châteaux qui dominent la vallée depuis leurs crêtes rocheuses (fig.1). Au sud de la ville actuelle de Cieza, le fleuve passe à travers un goulot qui est surveillé par le château de Cieza. A environ 2500m en aval du méandre, le Segura passe à nouveau à travers un goulot, plus étroit encore que celui de Cieza. Sur la crête qui surplombe le fleuve, rive gauche, fut implanté le château de Blanca. Le village musulman se développa au pied du château et sur sa pente septentrionale. À hauteur du village d'Ulea, à environ 6km en aval de Blanca, la vallée du Segura s'ouvre assez largement et la fin du tracé encaissé du fleuve est contrôlée par les châteaux de Ricote, rive droite, et celui d'Ulea / Ojós, rive gauche un peu en aval[12]. Plus loin, le contrôle est assuré par le château d'Archena.

A. Le château

S'agissant du site de Ricote, plusieurs éléments peuvent être réunis. D'abord, la localité fortifiée arabe est déjà mentionnée à la fin du IXe siècle, à l'occasion d'une campagne des troupes omeyyades dans la *kûra* de Tudmir, alors en rébellion contre Cordoue[13]; ce très ancien texte, sur lequel nous reviendrons, montre en effet l'importance du site et pose le problème des limites de son territoire et de son organisation. Véritable nid d'aigle de la Sierra de Ricote, le château est construit sur une crête rocheuse de forme allongée, presque perpendiculaire à la vallée du Río Segura, que le site domine d'une hauteur d'environ 350m. Il contrôle à la fois le village de Ricote, situé dans une petite vallée latérale et la vallée du Segura où sont établies les prises d'eau destinées aux irrigations locales. Le texte d'Ibn Hayyân, que nous mentionnions plus haut, éclaire l'organisation spatiale du site. Ce *hisn* de Ricote est, en effet, un de ceux pour lesquels on possède une mention très ancienne; comme Tijola, à Alméria, Ricote (ou *Riqût*) est signalé dès 896, date à laquelle le site est attaqué par l'armée émirale. On découvre à cette occasion qu'il est constitué d'une double structure emboîtée: une *qasaba* ou fortification installée au sommet du relief, et une zone d'habitat et de refuge dont on sait peu de choses

[10] Monte Marinet: Bazzana 1990, 248, 370; Bazzana & Guichard 1988, 18; Bazzana 1992, 261; Uxó: Bazzana, Cressier & Guichard 1988, 212-216, 256; Bazzana 1990, 248; Bazzana 1992, 260.

[11] Jacques-Meunié 1951, 185.

[12] Pour l'instant, seuls les châteaux de Cieza, Blanca et Ricote ont fait l'objet d'une prospection et de levés topographiques.

[13] Carmona Gonzalez 1990, 27.

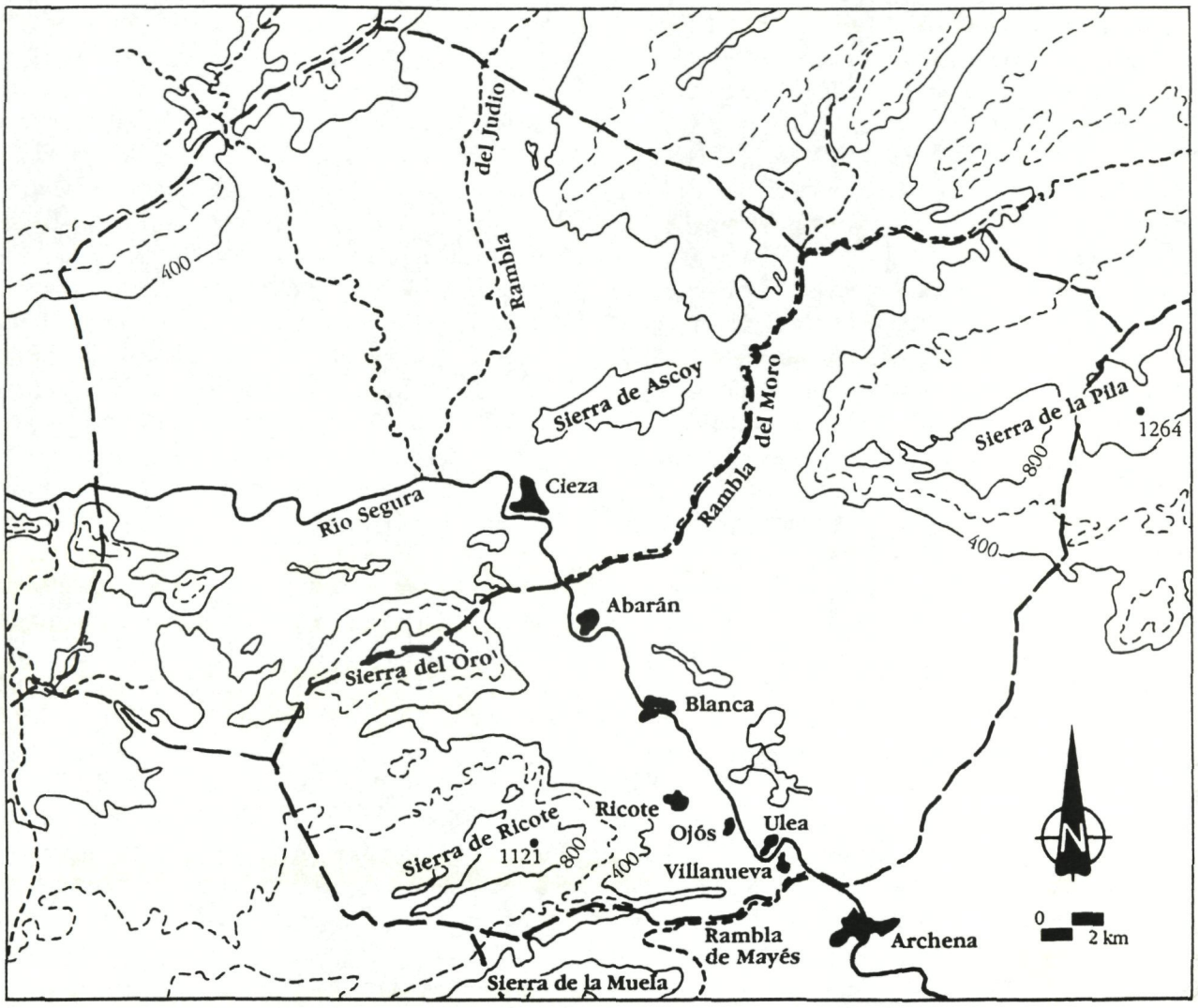

Fig. 2. - *Les territoires primitifs de Cieza et de Ricote.*

sinon qu'elle dispose d'une enceinte défensive, ou *hizâm*[14]; ce double niveau de fortifications atteste l'existence d'un noyau important de peuplement, complété peut-être par celui qui s'installe à l'extérieur de l'enceinte. Par la suite, les textes arabes ne sont pas très prolixes et le même site apparaît sous des noms divers –*al-Sukur* = Ricote[15], *Wâdî Riqût* = Río Ricote[16]– sans qu'on apprenne rien de plus à son propos. Le plan simplifié qui en a été établi montre comment les constructeurs ont adapté le château au terrain naturel, dont il épouse étroitement la forme; on distingue bien aussi la division spatiale du site en deux parties, qui constituent d'une part un secteur défensif, de superficie restreinte mais à forte valeur militaire et stratégique, d'autre part une assez vaste basse-cour à double fonction d'habitat et de refuge; des trouvailles céramiques de surface attestent une occupation au XIe siècle. Ces caractères font du château de Ricote un exemple classique parmi les fortifications musulmanes d'al-Andalus[17]. Ricote est de nouveau mentionné dans les textes à partir du XIIe siècle, puis, vers la fin de l'époque islamique, le château joue encore un rôle important dans les rébellions anti-almohades (1228-1241) –entre autres celle que dirige Ibn Hûd– puis dans la révolte mudéjare anti-castillane de 1264-1266: ce fut, à ce moment, le dernier bastion musulman de la région; il fut ensuite abandonné.

B. Les limites territoriales

Il est difficile de délimiter avec certitude les territoires anciens puisqu'on ne peut pas toujours tenir compte des limites communales actuelles. Les limites territoriales d'époque islamique n'ont pas

14 *Ibid.*; voir Bazzana, Cressier & Guichard 1988, 55.
15 Bazzana, Cressier & Guichard 1988, 67.
16 Guichard, 1990/91.
17 Voir, Bazzana, Cressier & Guichard 1988, *passim*.

toujours été conservées et les centres du peuplement chrétien (médiéval ou moderne) correspondent souvent à des réarrangements du territoire castral arabe dont les terroirs ont été répartis de façon plus égalitaire entre les différentes *aldeas* dépendantes de la *villa* qui fonctionne comme chef-lieu[18]; pour le Valle de Ricote, il s'agit de la *villa* du même nom. On sait cependant que, dans al-Andalus, les communautés islamiques du monde rural s'organisaient dans le cadre d'un territoire qui regroupait des terres de catégories et de qualités complémentaires, quelques noyaux de peuplement et un château –le *hisn*–, centre et symbole de la communauté, et qui pouvait être utilisé comme refuge en cas de guerres ou de difficultés. Comment retrouver les limites des anciens territoires? Les limites actuelles ne sont utilisables que si des documents contemporains de la conquête chrétienne peuvent démontrer qu'elles correspondent aux anciennes: c'est très souvent le cas à Valence mais on ne peut généraliser les résultats qui y ont été obtenus[19]; même la localisation actuelle d'un centre de peuplement de l'importance de Cieza est contestable, dans la mesure où elle répond à des mutations historiques récentes. Quant aux unités territoriales, très différentes les unes des autres par leurs dimensions spatiales[20], il existe des exemples aussi bien de fortes modifications comme de conservation de ce qui existait avant la conquête. Dans quelques zones d'al-Andalus, on a pu démontrer le mode d'organisation et de distribution spatiale des territoires castraux: l'observation concrète du terrain comme une lecture attentive de la documentation écrite le permettent et, si les textes arabes ne mentionnent que le nom du château, les documents chrétiens sont, sur ce point, beaucoup plus précis.

Dans la vallée moyenne du Segura, le val de Ricote montre une organisation complexe qui semble, à partir d'un territoire unique, éclater en plusieurs cellules juxtaposées: Abarán / Blanca, Ojós / Ulea et Ricote proprement dit; au contraire, un peu plus au nord, le territoire de Cieza paraît avoir conservé ses limites anciennes et passe, sans modification profonde de structure, à l'ordre militaire de Santiago. Entre les seigneuries de Cieza et de Ricote, cette limite était la même à l'époque mudéjare et la limite actuelle reflète apparemment une situation ancienne. Ainsi, la limite communale entre Cieza et Abarán suit un tracé plus ou moins rectiligne, déterminé sur la rive droite du Segura par une ligne de crête et sur la rive gauche par la Rambla del Moro[21]. En revanche, ce n'est que dans sa partie septentrionale que la limite entre Blanca et Abarán suit une ligne naturelle de crête; ensuite, depuis les hauteurs de la Sierra de la Pila jusqu'au fleuve, elle paraît moins rationnelle: sur la rive droite, elle s'approche d'abord du pied du Cabezo de la Cobertera, avant de partager ce site de grenier fortifié en deux, puis elle présente un tracé très artificiel qui, sans doute, reflète le partage, en époque chrétienne d'un territoire villageois plus ancien. Les autres limites communales entre Abarán / Blanca d'une part, Ricote d'autre part, suivent à nouveau une ligne de crête, ce qui correspond à un schéma tout à fait habituel qui pourrait remonter au IXe siècle. Dans le reste du Valle de Ricote, le village de Ojós semble aussi être né d'une amputation du territoire d'Ulea: les deux centres, éloignés seulement de quelque 1500m, sont séparés, sur la rive gauche, par une ligne de crête qui passe –elle aussi et de manière tout à fait anormale– à travers le site du château d'Ulea! Ajoutons que l'on peut remarquer, dans le Valle de Ricote, que les habitats situés près du fleuve s'étendaient, à l'origine, sur les deux rives: Abarán / Blanca et Ojós / Ulea. L'actuel Ricote ne touche le fleuve que sur 200m à peine, au pied du relief sur lequel fut implanté le château. Pour l'instant, l'analyse des limites communales actuelles permet de penser que, en époque islamique, mais en un moment non déterminé, la vallée du Río Segura faisait partie d'un seul *hisn*[22], déjà mentionné à la fin du IXe siècle[23]; au nord se trouvait l'actuel territoire de Cieza, au sud celui du Valle de Ricote[24], dont faisait partie les territoires actuels de Ricote, Abarán, Blanca, Ojós et Ulea, séparés seulement à l'époque chrétienne

C. L'étude du regadío

Dans tout le Sud-Est espagnol, l'irrigation est elle une nécessité géographique? Il semble que non. En effet, si nous laissons de côté le secteur semi-déser-

[18] Guichard 1983, 87-93.

[19] Bazzana 1992, 221 donne des exemples où les limites territoriales restent inchangées; lorsqu'il y a des modifications, elles sont de trois sortes: 1. amputation du territoire musulman pour la création de nouvelles entités, 2. distribution entre plusieurs seigneuries des terres d'un *hisn*, 3. parfois, le regroupement de plusieurs *husun*.

[20] Voir l'exemple du *Shark al-Andalus*, où apparaissent de nombreux *husûn*: BAZZANA 1992, 287-307; Guichard 1990/91, document 43, "Données comparées sur quelques castra et territoires castraux valenciens".

[21] *Rambla*: lit torrentiel à écoulement sporadique; voir Hérin, *s.d.*, 13.

[22] Bazzana 1992, 223; plusieurs exemples, que fournit la zone située au Nord de Valence, conquise par le roi Jaimel entre 1234 et 1238, montrent comment les nouveaux conquérants ont conservées les limites territoriales anciennes au moment où commence le processus de féodalisation de la région.

[23] Carmona Gonzalez 1990, 27.

[24] *Ibid.*

tique du Sud de la région valencienne (avec Orihuela et Elche), le milieu naturel permettait pendant le Moyen Age la culture de quelques arbres xérophiles –figuiers, oliviers, caroubiers– ou de plantes qui achèvent de mûrir au début de l'été (orge et blé par exemple). Ceci signifie clairement que le *regadío* est un fait culturel.

Le résultat de différentes recherches menées aussi bien en Espagne qu'au Portugal ou au Maroc, montre que, au Moyen Age, les agriculteurs islamiques utilisaient simultanément quatre modèles technologiques pour récupérer de l'eau; il s'agit d'irrigations qui utilisent:

- soit les sources alimentant des bassins, comme les marges des Baléares qui d'ailleurs, rappellent des systèmes semblables trouvés au Yémen[25];
- soit des puits dont l'eau est tirée à l'aide d'un récipient attaché à une simple corde ou à un balancier, système méditerranéen par excellence, répandu aussi dans toute l'Europe du Sud-Est[26];
- soit les roues élévatoires, comme la noria (de l'arabe *nâ'ûra*) avec sa roue verticale installée sur un canal ou sur la rivière elle-même, ou la *sâniya* (arabe, en catalan *cenia* ou *sinia*), roue à double tambour supportant des cordes auxquelles sont attachés les godets de terre cuite[27];
- soit, enfin, les divers systèmes d'*acequias* ou canaux qui transportent l'eau déviée d'une rivière par un barrage, ou de *qanats*, sortes de galeries à pente légère, ventilées par des puits verticaux alignés[28].

Selon les travaux les plus récents, le grand développement du *regadío* se situe en pleine époque islamique, vers les IXe et Xe siècles; puis, après le XIIIe siècle et en époque chrétienne, Valence et Murcie connaissent une nouvelle phase d'expansion; une autre se place à la fin du Moyen Age, si importante que certains auteurs ont parlé d'un véritable "boom" hydraulique, qui commence vers 1480. Les grands réseaux de *regadío* qui s'organisent alors s'étendent à l'échelle de toute une région et sont assez différents des microsystèmes qu'avaient mis en place les Musulmans.

a) Problèmes de méthodologie

Une autre difficulté, latente mais bien réelle, des recherches sur les irrigations médiévales est la rareté des documents les concernant; l'époque chrétienne fournit cependant –principalement à partir du XVe siècle– une documentation exploitable, qui montre un développement rapide à partir de l'établissement de la paix en 1492[29], et qui permet de mieux connaître l'histoire sociale des époques antérieures. La rareté est quasi totale pour l'époque islamique où les géographes pas plus que les chroniqueurs ne se livrent jamais à une description précise des espaces agraires et de leurs modes de mise en valeur. On cherchera vainement des textes arabes relatifs aux *regadíos* de Cieza ou de Ricote, mais on pourra mobiliser quelques informations, d'ordre général, sur l'existence même des réseaux et sur leur fonctionnement, dans la littérature agronomique étudiée par Lucie Bolens[30], ou dans les recueils (seule trace écrite d'un droit coutumier, essentiellement oral) de consultations juridiques[31].

Comment, dans ces conditions, mener l'enquête et tenter de restituer une cartographie des structures d'irrigation d'époque islamique? La méthodologie employée s'appuie sur les méthodes de travail de "l'archéologie extensive" et privilégie donc les prospections de terrain, l'analyse de photographies aériennes[32] et la modélisation des résultats obtenus lors des études de cas les plus productives (celles qui concernent le début de l'époque chrétienne). Deux observations restent à faire. La première concerne les travaux hydrauliques –captage de l'eau par barrages, déviations, canaux et micro-systèmes de conduits– qui, une fois construits, marquent définitivement le paysage, introduisant ce que Miquel Barceló[33] appelle le "principe de rigidité", véritable "loi" qui interdit les modifications de détail ou les transformations partielles de la structuration de l'espace agraire: à Cieza, Abarán / Blanca ou Ricote, certains éléments du système hydraulique islamique (Xe-XIIIe siècles) restent reconnaissables à travers celui de l'époque chrétienne (XVe et XVIe siècle, principalement); ni la conquête féodale du XIIIe siècle ni les phases successives de dépeuplement et repeuplement des XIVe-XVe siècles n'ont pu effacer les traces des époques antérieures. Enfin, il convient de bien connaître les principes élémentaires qui régissent le fonctionne-

25 Pirenne 1977.

26 Voir un exemple médiéval dans Butzer *et alii* 1985, 492-493 et fig.7; *id.*, 495-496 et fig.11.

27 Voir Colin 1932, 22-60; Colin 1933, 156-157; Torres Balbas1940, 192-208; Torres Balbas 1942, 461-469; Schiøler 1962, 480-486; Schiøler 1973; Bazzana & Montmessin, sous presse.

28 Bertrand & Cressier1985, 115-135; Bertrand & Cressier 1986, 569-580; Barceló *et alii*, 1986.

29 Voir Rodriguez Llopis 1988; Lemeunier, sous presse.

30 Bolens 1974; Bolens 1981; Bolens 1989, 71-87; Bolens 1990.

31 M. de Epalsa 1988; V. Lagardere 1991.

32 Vol américain de l'année 1956, vols plus récents et de meilleure qualité de "Hacienda" vers 1974, puis de IRYDA.

33 Barceló 1989.

34 Communication de M. Barceló au *Castrum5* à Murcie (*Castrum5. Archéologie des espaces agraires*, Madrid-Rome, sous presse).

ment des espaces irrigués dans l'Islam médiéval[34]. Toute possibilité d'accès à l'eau est mise à profit et les conditions technologiques sont des plus simples: elles ne requièrent aucun investissement majeur, ni n'imposent le recours à un spécialiste de l'hydraulique; elles sont le fruit d'un savoir paysan, d'une tradition transmise à travers les siècles, à laquelle se mêle cependant la connaissance théorique des principes de base du nivellement et des écoulements par gravité; l'un des moyens les plus simples –en même temps que le plus commun et le plus répandu– consiste, en amont des terrains à irriguer, à dériver en partie, grâce à un barrage, les eaux du fleuve vers la bouche d'entrée d'un canal d'irrigation: la pente naturelle du fleuve étant plus forte que celle du canal, le gain en altitude est suffisant pour amener l'eau, à travers un ensemble de canaux ramifiés souvent construits en terre, vers les champs, où des systèmes peu sophistiqués mais efficaces de vannes et d'obturations temporaires permettent l'irrigation des parcelles.

b) Le système actuellement visible

On distingue trois secteurs principaux, que l'on décrira sommairement avant de détailler celui du territoire actuel de Cieza.

- Le premier tronçon dessert la *huerta* de Cieza; il se développe sur les deux rives du fleuve, les premières "prises" d'eau étant situées à une dizaine de kilomètres à l'Ouest de la ville. On retrouve encore, aussi bien sur la photographie aérienne que sur le terrain, la boucle d'une ancienne *acequia*, vraisemblablement d'époque islamique, qui circonscrit les terrains bordant le méandre juste en amont de Cieza. Sur la rive gauche comme sur la rive droite, les eaux canalisées rejoignent le Segura en aval de Cieza, juste avant la limite territoriale qui la sépare d'Abarán: frontière, en époque islamique, entre les *hisn/s* de *Siyâsa* et d'Abarán.
- Le deuxième tronçon concerne le territoire de Blanca / Abarán. Deux *acequias* principales prennent leurs eaux, respectivement rive gauche et rive droite, à la limite du territoire avec Cieza et parcourent la *huerta* jusqu'à la petite ville de Blanca. Sur la rive gauche, l'Acequia de Blanca a son origine à la prise dite "del Menjú", sur l'embouchure de la Rambla del Moro; au long de son cours, elle est aujourd'hui équipée de trois norias, celle de Don García, la Principale et celle de Fernández[35]. La tradition orale locale[36] date l'état actuel de la noria de Don García du XIXe siècle, mais fait remonter sa construction à l'époque d'Isabelle la Catholique à la fin du XVe siècle; les autres sont plus récentes. Sur la rive droite, l'Acequia de Charraca, conserve deux norias, toutes deux modernes. Dans une des vallées latérales importantes, formée par la Rambla de Benito, cette *acequia* court au sommet d'un aqueduc qui traverse une petite vallée latérale; une analyse de la maçonnerie de briques et des modes de mise en œuvre indique qu'il fut construite à la fin du XVe siècle ou dans la première moitié du XVIe siècle, c'est-à-dire au moment d'une nouvelle colonisation du Valle de Ricote; il servait à irriguer de nouveaux terrains plus éloignés du fleuve. Des deux côtés du fleuve, les canaux principaux suivent la limite entre les terres les plus basses et les premières collines, au relief plus accidenté; ainsi, sur la rive gauche, on voit le canal contourner systématiquement les petites hauteurs sur lesquelles –sous forme de bâtiments isolés ou de petits hameaux– est implanté l'habitat. Au sud d'Abarán, l'Acequia de Blanca est prolongée par l'Acequia de Abarán, qui suit les premières pentes sur lesquelles est installée la vieille ville d'Abarán et ses extensions plus récentes; le canal dessert encore un moulin avant de rejoindre le fleuve. Il est presque certain que ces *acequias* sont, au moins pour une partie de leur tracé, d'origine arabe[37]. Des deux côtés du Río Segura, les canaux franchissent le goulot de Blanca. Rive droite, la Charraca irrigue encore quelques terres agricoles avant de rejoindre la rivière. Rive gauche, l'Acequia de Blanca passe sous la ville actuelle: le tracé tortueux de la rue principale –qui sert de limite entre la partie d'origine arabe et la partie chrétienne de la *villa* de Blanca– correspond au tracé de l'*acequia* qui suit la limite entre les hauteurs situées au pied du château où se trouvait l'habitat islamique, et les terres basses, occupées seulement après la conquête. Le canal rejoint le fleuve en aval de la ville de Blanca.
- Le troisième tronçon est constitué par les canaux de Ricote-Ojós-Ulea. Au pied du château de Ricote, qui ainsi domine et contrôle les prises d'eau, un barrage alimentait deux canaux, un de chaque côté du fleuve; il est recouvert par l'aménagement moderne de la centrale électrique, qui ferme aujourd'hui le goulot de Ricote. On ne reconnaît dans ce secteur qu'un seul tracé de canal principal, avec, sur la rive gauche, une seule noria; on constatera d'ailleurs que la vallée n'est pas très large à cet endroit et ne présente pas non plus de vallées latérales, ce qui rend inutile la construction d'*acequias* supplémentaires. Le parcellaire y a été fortement modifié, mais la présence, sur le tracé actuel, d'irrigations d'époque musulmane paraît assurée. Comme à Blanca, les deux

35 Martinez Soler & Banegas Ortiz 1994.

36 Noté en novembre 1994 auprès d'un *huertano*.

37 Compte tenu de la topographie du terrain, ils n'ont pu être modifiés ou déplacés.

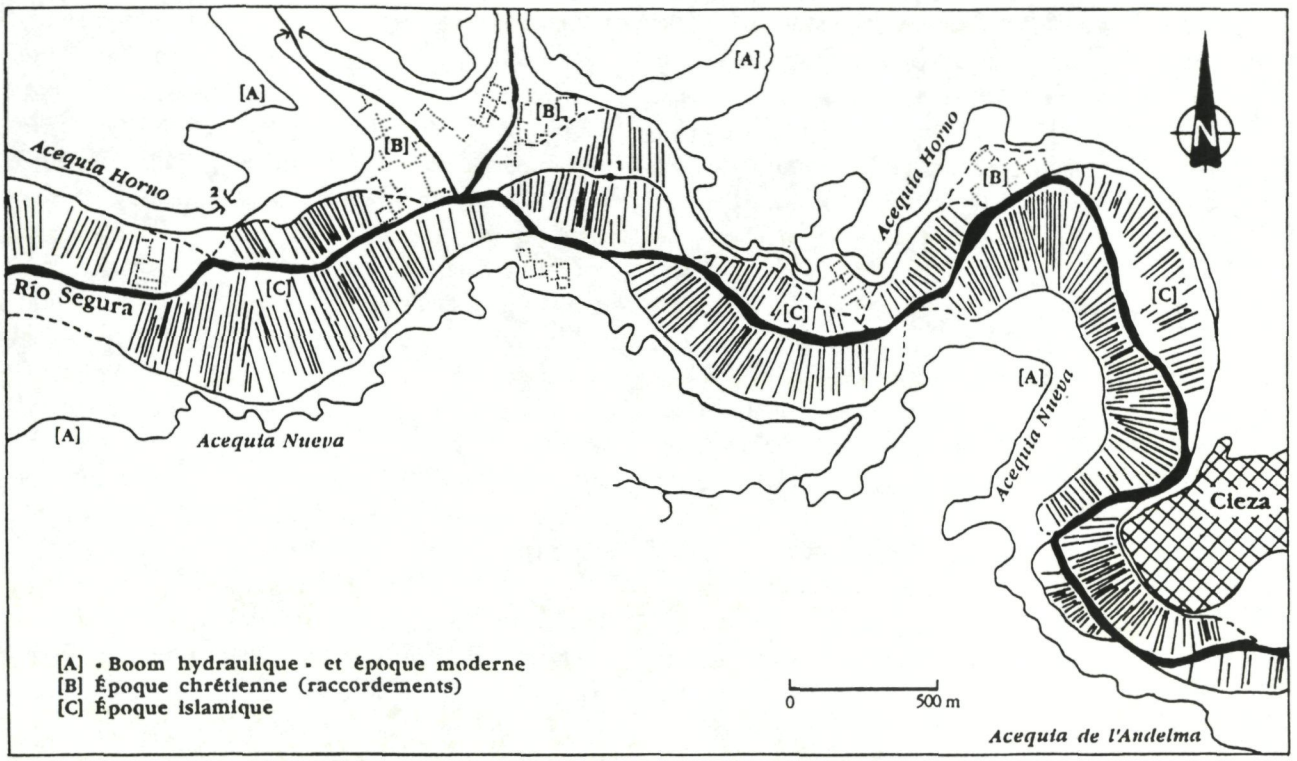

Fig. 3. - *Interprétation - à partir d'une photo aérienne - du secteur irrigué du moyen Segura en amont de la ville de Cieza. Les* acequias *des différentes époques (A, B et C) et le parcellaire en lamelles des premiers terrains irrigués (C); 1. localisation d'une éventuelle* noria *irriguant les terres situées en amont; 2. passage en tunnel du canal.*

canaux dépassent le goulot d'Ulea / Ojós. Sur la rive gauche, l'*acequia* passe sous les maisons d'Ulea pour alimenter un moulin situé à l'extrémité orientale du village; puis elle rejoint le Segura. Sur la rive droite en revanche, l'*acequia* poursuit son cours vers la ville de Villanueva del Río Segura, puis en aval de celle-ci. La présence d'une autre *acequia* entre le fleuve et le canal venant de Ricote / Ojós permet de considérer celui-ci comme plus récent. De toute façon, dans cette partie du val de Ricote, la longueur des *acequias* signale des aménagements d'époque chrétienne.

Plusieurs problèmes se posent à l'examen des systèmes hydrauliques du Valle de Ricote. Ils sont anciens, mais sont-ils médiévaux ou antiques? Les phases chronologiques de leur mise en place, peuvent-elles être établies et qu'avait-il avant le premier réseau? Comment ces systèmes se sont-ils maintenus à travers les siècles et quelle confiance peut-on faire aux observations réalisées aujourd'hui sur des structures aussi fragiles? La réponse à cette dernière question relève de la réflexion méthodologique: on sait que, tout au long des époques moderne et contemporaine, les canaux ont dû être réparés, voire reconstruits; leurs tracés cependant sont restés les mêmes.

Pour l'observateur d'aujourd'hui, trois systèmes se superposent, les plus récents venant réutiliser des portions, conservées ou remodelées selon un tracé identique:

- le réseau de développement actuel ou sub-actuel, qui utilise des eaux "externes" provenant des nappes phréatiques (remontées par pompes électriques) ou des adductions artificielles (par tuyaux souterrains et tunnels) venant d'autres bassins hydrauliques (surtout celui du Tage),
- le réseau moderne, décrit par les textes chrétiens et dont le tracé remonte à plusieurs époques mais principalement aux XVe-XVIe siècles[38],
- enfin le réseau d'époque islamique, dont nous allons tenter de retrouver quelques portions et d'en comprendre le fonctionnement.

3 Le réseau hydraulique de Cieza / Ricote

On sait que l'hydraulique, qui fait partie des connaissances agronomiques, a été étudiée et divulguée par les agronomes andalous[39]; les données que procure cette documentation peuvent être complétées par quelques textes juridiques[40] qui, de façon partielle et occasionnelle, expliquent les modes habituels

[38] Communication personnelle de Guy Lemeunier.

[39] Bolens 1981.

[40] Glick 1970; de Epalsa 1988, 13-19; Barceló 1989, VIII-L; Bolens 1989, 71-87; Lagardere 1991, 83-122; Lagardere 1992, 213-225.

d'usage et de gestion de l'eau. Cependant, une autre catégorie documentaire facilite la compréhension du fonctionnement des systèmes islamiques: depuis quelques années, c'est l'archéologie qui montre l'organisation spatiale et les caractères technologiques de l'hydraulique agraire andalouse[41].

A. Problématique générale

On sait que, pour anciens qu'ils soient, les travaux hydrauliques s'inscrivent dans les paysages et laissent des traces qui peuvent traverser les siècles. Dans la *huerta* de Murcie comme dans la partie basse du cours du Segura (entre Orihuela et la mer), plusieurs études ont été effectuées récemment. Certes, l'archéologie hydraulique de la *huerta* murcienne proprement dite reste, en bonne partie, à faire; toutefois, on commence à disposer d'informations concernant les axes principaux de la structuration du paysage agraire. S'il est impossible, par manque de données, de poser globalement le problème des espaces agricoles de toute une région, on peut en revanche proposer de nouvelles problématiques à propos des *regadíos* médiévaux, de leurs origines et de leurs phases d'évolution.

B. Considérations méthodologiques

Ce type de recherche suppose quelques difficultés méthodologiques. La première résulte directement des réalités du terrain prospecté. Il s'agit d'abord de zones de vallée densément occupées et avec de nombreuses constructions. Ensuite, la *huerta* connaît une mise en culture dans laquelle orangers et citronniers dominent largement; la prospection de tels vergers, peu ou pas labourés s'avère difficile. De plus, il s'agit d'études urgentes puisque les destructions actuelles, dues à l'extension urbaine, à la réorganisation des axes de circulation et, surtout, à l'aménagement, depuis les années quatre-vingt de nouveaux canaux d'irrigation, arrachent ou effacent toutes traces des anciens systèmes; seul le tracé, laissé plus ou moins intact, subsiste.

Une autre difficulté, latente mais bien réelle à l'heure de rassembler des informations sur les irrigations médiévales, est la rareté de la documentation écrite: rareté relative pour l'époque chrétienne, rareté quasi totale pour l'époque islamique. Comment, donc, faire cette enquête et tenter une reconstitution théorique des structures d'irrigation d'époque islamique? La méthodologie suivie est simple mais il est bon de la préciser, ne serait-ce que pour que le lecteur en saisisse les possibilités mais aussi les limites. La démarche prend appui sur les méthodes de travail de ce que l'on appelle "l'archéologie extensive"[42], c'est-à-dire que sont privilégiées les prospections au sol, l'analyse de photographies aériennes et un essai de modélisation des résultats obtenus à partir des études de cas les plus productives; la carte permet la représentation et la mise en évidence des informations recueillies mais c'est la photographie aérienne verticale (avec, par exemple, des agrandissements au 1/5000) que se trouve être le document de base de la recherche: elle nous procure, en effet, les indices qui permettent de diriger et d'orienter les prospections, et fournit quelques données de chronologie relative éclairant l'évolution du paysage. Le mode de raisonnement, à partir des traces révélées par les clichés aériens récents –qui révèlent souvent, on le sait, une réalité disparue– tente de remonter aux siècles antérieurs afin de retrouver, dans la mesure du possible, l'état médiéval des structures étudiées; un principe de base est que le tracé des installations hydrauliques agraires répond à une véritable "loi" qui interdit les modifications et les transformations partielles: dans la majorité des cas, le paysage reste dans l'état où il était au début, seulement touché par les mutations majeures qui sont, dans notre exemple de Cieza / Abarán, la conquête féodale du XIIIe siècle ou les phases successives de dépeuplement / repeuplement des XIVe-XVe siècles.

C. Les sources chrétiennes nous éclairent sur les regadíos du bas Moyen Age

Les travaux récents des géographes, tout comme ceux des historiens de l'époque moderne ont mis au jour l'organisation spatiale et territoriale des *regadíos* ciezans. Mais le problème subsiste de savoir quelles sont les modifications d'époque chrétienne et quel était le premier *regadío* musulman.

Pendant l'époque chrétienne, la première évolution que l'on constate met en évidence, selon G. Lemeunier, une forte extension des périmètres irrigués et une consolidation des infrastructures[43]; le même auteur pense que, avant, c'est-à-dire à la fin de l'époque islamique, l'économie agricole de *Madîna Siyâsa* reposait sur la mise en valeur d'un *regadío* alimenté par les eaux du Segura, grâce au canal "de

[41] Voir, par exemple, Kirchner & Navarro 1994, 159-182. Voir, comme synthèse rapide des problèmes posés par les techniques de *regadío* et de maîtrise de l'eau au Moyen Age, Bazzana 1994, 317-335.

[42] Bazzana & Guichard 1988.

[43] Lemeunier, s.p.

l'Andelma" (aujourd'hui appelé Acequia de Landerma); sur la rive gauche, quelques hameaux exploitaient les eaux provenant des sources de Ascoy, d'El Ojo et de Bolvax[44]. Antérieures à la réalisation de prospections archéologiques, ces idées ne sont pas fausses et mettent bien en relation –et avec raison– la vie de la *madîna* islamique et l'existence d'un système élaboré d'irrigation. Il convient cependant de compléter et, surtout, nuancer ces affirmations: on verra plus loin qu'il n'existait pas un seul *regadío*, au pied des pentes descendant de *Siyâsa*, mais que plusieurs zones basses, dans les méandres du Segura étaient aussi utilisées dans un système original et complexe qui dessinait, tout au long du fleuve, une sorte de chaîne de terres irriguées; de même, il faudra imaginer qu'on ne peut penser, pour l'époque antérieure au milieu du XIIIe siècle, à l'existence d'une seule –et longue, évidemment– *acequia* sur la rive droite; de même que pour la rive gauche, il ne s'agissait pas d'un canal unique mais d'un succession de plusieurs canaux, courts et chargés chacun d'irriguer un espace de petites dimensions.

Le "boom hydraulique" commence vers l'année 1480 et se prolonge pendant un peu plus d'un siècle; après la construction de la Acequia del Horno, dans la première moitié du XVIe siècle, on peut considérer que le système est pratiquement achevé: il ne va pas se modifier ensuite sauf quand viennent à se développer –mais seulement dans notre XXe siècle– de nouveaux moyens techniques (puits profonds, pompes électriques, transvases, etc.).

Après la conquête chrétienne, les seigneurs castillans avaient intérêt non seulement à repeupler les territoires conquis (ou, au moins, à essayer de maintenir sur place les populations musulmanes), mais aussi à mettre en état de marche le système d'irrigation, base de prospérité économique pour toute la région. Pour cela, les seigneurs ne tardèrent pas à investir pour assurer à terme une croissance de leurs revenus: quand, en 1483, le Commandeur de l'Ordre de Santiago signe avec les mudéjares de Hellin une charte de repeuplement du village d'Abarán, il leur promet de réparer et d'entretenir les canaux qui prennent de l'eau dans le fleuve.

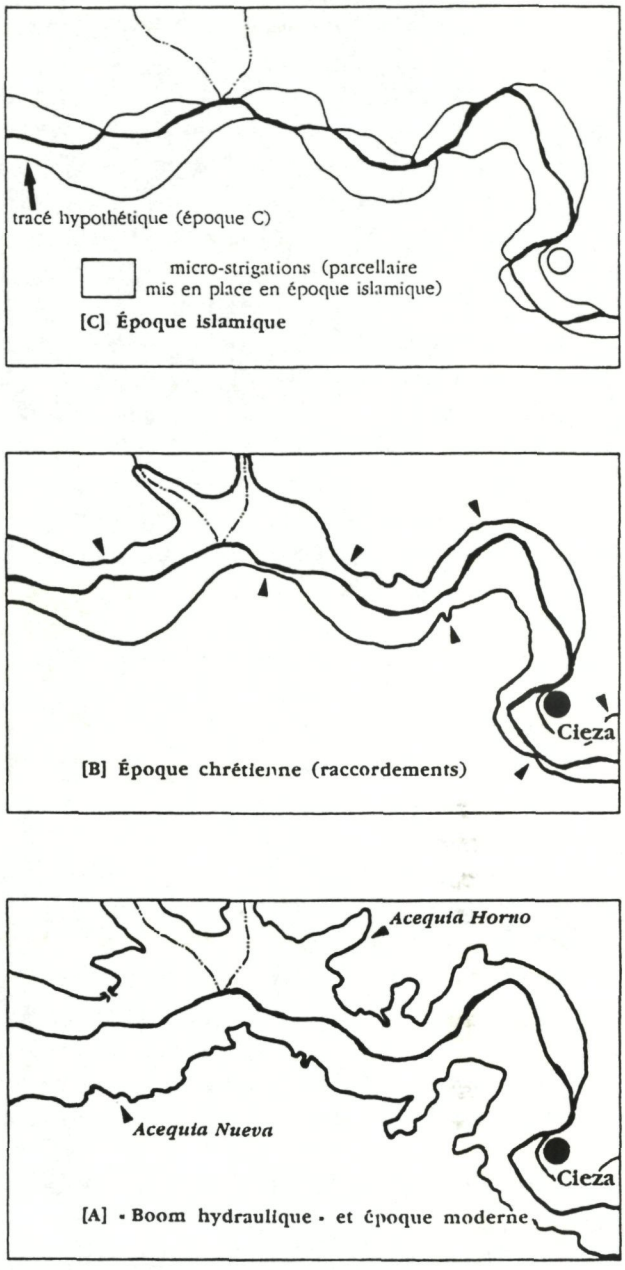

Fig. 4. - *Evolution du système hydraulique et de l'implantation des canaux à travers les phases principales du développement du réseau des* acequias.

D. Le regadío médiéval de Cieza

L'étude des structures de la petite hydraulique agraire qui apparaissent sur le territoire de Cieza montre l'existence de sources naturelles exploitées depuis les premiers siècles du Moyen Age: elles se trouvent associées à quelques petits noyaux d'habitat situés sur les pentes de la vallée mais assez loin du fleuve; en époque islamique, une partie des eaux d'irrigation provenaient de ces sources que l'on trouvait principalement sur la rive droite; certaines auraient été mises en état de production par les agriculteurs musulmans; quelques vestiges, dont parlent certains documents, étaient encore visibles et fonctionnels aux XVe et XVIe siècles; ce type d'aménagements suscitait alors une grande surprise: on les disait "construits avec une technique incroyable". Peu de traces de l'utilisation des sources se conservent; en revanche il reste possible d'étudier les tracés des canaux et d'en tirer quelques éléments chronologiques.

[44] *Ibid.*

a) Structuration et chronologie

On est conduit à distinguer trois phases chronologiques: une phase A, qui correspond au développement du système des canaux durant le "boom hydraulique" du XVIe siècle; une phase B, caractérisée par les premières réparations d'époque chrétienne; enfin, une phase C, qui correspond au réseau d'époque islamique. L'examen des photos aériennes et la prospection au sol montrent l'existence, sur les deux rives du Segura, d'un double réseau d'*acequias*. À partir des premières "prises", situées à l'Ouest de la ville, il faudrait distinguer deux séries de canaux (époques A et B).

- Au Nord du Segura, sur la rive gauche, une *acequia* suit la limite entre les terres basses, disposées le long du fleuve, et les premières pentes des collines voisines qui offrent un relief plus accidenté (époque B); le tracé de cette *acequia* présenté une particularité sur laquelle on devra s'interroger: pourquoi, à plusieurs reprises, s'éloigne-t-elle du fleuve –ce qui permet d'irriguer une zone assez vaste– pour ensuite se rapprocher de nouveau du lit du Segura, comment si elle essayait de le rejoindre? En réalité, elle s'en éloigne une nouvelle fois afin d'alimenter une nouvelle zone irriguée. Une autre *acequia* –dite "Del Horno", du nom d'un hameau proche de la prise (construite en 1600)– prend ses eaux à trois kilomètres en amont du premier canal et se trouve située sur les premières pentes des collines qui bordent la vallée (époque A); elle présente un parcours plus tourmenté qui lui permet de pénétrer toutes les petites dépressions ou vallées latérales, où de bonnes terres sont disponibles: la surface irriguée est dès lors beaucoup plus ample; elle achève son cours dans le fleuve, au lieu-dit "Del Menjú".
- Au Sud, sur la rive droite, apparaît la même disposition spatiale de deux *acequias* distinctes: il s'agit de la Acequia Landerma (ou canal "de l'Andelma", dans la documentation médiévale) et de la Acequia Nueva; elle sont séparées par des distances variables selon les cas (parfois seulement quelques dizaines de mètres); le différentiel d'altitude étant de l'ordre de quelques mètres, ce qui est bien suffisant pour augmenter sensiblement l'espace irrigué.

Il s'agit donc d'une double série de deux canaux qui apparaît sur la carte, sur les photos aériennes et sur le terrain. Il est clair que nous devons regrouper typologiquement, d'une part les deux *acequias* les plus proches du fleuve (*acequias* basses), d'autre part les deux autres, implantées sur les pentes des collines (*acequias* hautes); il convient d'interpréter cette double réalité en fonction du "principe de rigidité" dont nous avons parlé et selon lequel l'une comme l'autre répondent à des logiques différentes. Si l'on veut connaître leurs dates de construction, il faut rechercher deux époques distinctes (l'une étant plus récente que l'autre): les *acequias* hautes correspondraient alors à l'époque A –la plus proche d'aujourd'hui dont les données historiques indiquent une construction se situant aux XVe et XVIe siècles; les *acequias* basses à une époque B ou C, antérieure à la précédente et qu'il n'est pas illogique, si l'on tient compte de ce que l'on sait des irrigations musulmanes de Cieza, de situer avant la conquête chrétienne. De toute manière, les *acequias* hautes, dont les prises sont installées en amont de celles qui alimentent les *acequias* basses, ne peuvent être que postérieures à l'époque islamique; la présence même de ces *acequias* hautes est en contradiction complète avec ce que l'on sait du droit islamique des eaux: les traditions juridiques interdisent que l'on s'approprie les eaux d'un fleuve (ou d'un canal) au-dessus d'un barrage déjà existant, car ce serait un véritable vol de l'eau à ceux qui y étaient installés les premiers[45].

Sur la rive droite, un canal "ancien", c'est-à-dire d'époque B ou C et appelée Acequia Landerma –il figure dans les textes médiévaux sous le nom de "Canal de l'Andelma"[46]– parcourt les terres plus près du fleuve; il est, pour ainsi dire, doublé quelques mètres plus haut par la Acequia Nueva; entre le "vieux canal" et le fleuve, le parcellaire, vu sur les photos aériennes, présente une disposition caractéristique en micro-strigations parallèles ou en léger éventail. C'est ce que l'on remarque bien, parmi d'autres exemples, avec les parcelles situées dans le méandre de la rive gauche, en aval de la ville: là, cependant, une double orientation des parcelles pourrait signaler un essai de restructuration réalisé à une époque inconnue. Une rapide prospection au sol montre que ces parcelles avaient initialement une largeur moyenne d'environ 7m. Sur l'une comme sur l'autre rive, les eaux canalisées retournent au Segura en aval de Cieza, juste avant d'arriver à la limite territoriale qui sépare cette ville du territoire d'Abarán: limite ou frontière mineure d'époque islamique tardive, entre les châteaux de *Siyâsa* et de Blanca.

S'agissant des *acequias* basses, l'examen des photos aériennes révèle un phénomène particulier: les canaux suivent un tracé présentant quelques anomalies; en complétant notre information par des données de terrain, cinq séries d'éléments apparaissent.

- On a déjà noté que le canal de l'Andelma, en un tracé daté de l'époque B, semblait dessiner, à partir de la prise Del Menjú, une courbe de grande ampleur; à la fin de cette courbe, il se rapprochait du fleuve, passant à peine à quelques mètres du lit actuel.

[45] Bolens 1989; Lagardere 1991 et 1992.

[46] Lemeunier, s.p.

- Il paraît clair, d'autre part, que ceci ne se produit pas de manière accidentelle mais que, au contraire, se répète sur les deux rives du fleuve, le long des deux *acequias* basses seulement: celles-ci quittent le Segura pour, ensuite, s'en approcher une nouvelle fois avant de s'éloigner de nouveau. Ainsi, elles dessinent une série de festons, qui délimitent des superficies variables.
- Aucun indice de ce type n'apparaît au long des *acequias* hautes qui, de leur côté, présentent un tracé paraissant dépendre beaucoup plus (et peut-être uniquement) du relief: dans ce cas, c'est la présence plus ou moins prégnante des collines et c'est la vigueur des pentes qui conditionnent l'emplacement du canal par rapport au fleuve.
- Un feston se termine toujours avant qu'un autre ne commence à se développer. Que se passe-t-il donc dans ce secteur de la vallée? Ce que suggèrent l'analyse des documents cartographiques et photographiques antérieurs aux récents travaux de régularisation du Segura et ce que confirment les prospections archéologiques, c'est que nous sommes là en présence de vestiges ténus mais, bien réels d'une ancienne organisation hydraulique.
- Ainsi, juste en aval de la ville actuelle de Cieza, le canal appelé aujourd'hui Acequia Landerma s'interrompait, durant une phase primitive (d'époque C?), pour retourner au fleuve; alors, c'est un autre prise d'eau, située plus en aval, qui permettait le développement d'un nouveau canal qui se développait ensuite vers le Sud-Est. Il se passait la même chose rive gauche, où, antérieurement aux phases A et B, la *acequia* arrivant de l'Ouest s'interrompait juste avant d'arriver à Cieza, pour reprendre plus loin son cours, là où le canal actuel prend le nom de Acequia Marcelino: sur la photo aérienne comme sur le terrain, on remarque encore la présence d'une ample courbe que dessine une ancienne *acequia*, vraisemblablement édifiée en époque islamique. Elle vient délimiter les terres qui bordent le méandre situé en amont de Cieza; la prise est aujourd'hui détruite mais on peut encore en retrouver des vestiges; le débouché du canal reste, lui, bien visible.

Sur tous ces espaces, délimités par les *acequias* dont nous venons de parler, se développent des champs cultivés (jardins irrigués) qui présentent une distribution parcellaire caractéristique, au moins dans la Péninsule ibérique et au Maghreb, de l'époque islamique[47]: parcelles étroites et allongées, qui forment des micro-strigations souvent disposées en éventail; ces parcelles se disposent perpendiculairement au tracé du canal et/ou du lit du fleuve. Evidemment, ne n'est qu'entre la Acequia de l'Andelma et le Segura, ou – d'une manière plus générale– dans les secteurs situés entre les *acequias* d'époque B et le fleuve que l'on peut faire ces observations; au contraire, le parcellaire est totalement différent entre, par exemple, la Acequia de Landerma et la Acequia Nueva: là, il s'organise selon une maille carrée qui correspond à un parcellaire plus récent (époque B, avec modifications en époque A). Parfois cependant, cette maille vient recouvrir des zones théoriquement inclues dans le système de *regadío* ancien (c'est-à-dire irrigué à partir des *acequias* les plus anciennes): ceci indique que, bien que le canal primitif ait conservé son tracé antérieur (d'époque C), le parcellaire lui a été réorganisé et redistribué, peut-être après une phase d'abandon et de ruine des structures de distribution de l'eau; dans l'histoire de la région, c'est la période fin XIIIe siècle - XIVe siècle qui correspond le mieux à ce moment.

D'une manière générale, dans les systèmes d'irrigation d'al-Andalus et comme on a pu l'observer dans le cas de *Siyâsa*, il n'y a pas de canal unique, apte à répartir les eaux sur l'ensemble du territoire castral; au contraire, apparaît une sorte de succession de petites unités séparées les unes des autres par des espaces non irrigués: chacune dispose de sa propre prise d'eau. De plus, ces micro-irrigations se distribuent tout au long de la vallée, où l'on voit se dessiner une chaîne de zones vertes, bien délimitées par les *acequias*; le droit islamique conforte l'existence ce ces petites unités –entités fermées entre la prise et l'exutoire– qui, s'agissant d'un fleuve comme le Segura, disposent de la quantité d'eau nécessaire. Enfin, en relation topographique directe avec le *regadío* ainsi établi, existe un habitat d'époque islamique, situé à côté de la zone irriguée et à quelques mètres au-dessus du canal majeur; c'est ce qui a déjà été mis en évidence dans la petite vallée du Río Albaida, à Valence[48] où le modèle est parfaitement clair puisque à chaque zone de *regadío* correspond un habitat actuel ou une *alquería* médiévale, aujourd'hui abandonnée.

b) Conclusions: vers une archéologie agraire du Valle del Segura

Dans cette première approche du problème des irrigations médiévales de Cieza, nos conclusions sont, à l'évidence, provisoires. Nous avons posé, à partir de l'exemple du Valle de Ricote, un certain nombre de problèmes, mais toutes les réponses n'ont pas encore été trouvées; nous espérons qu'il sera possible d'aller plus loin dans l'interprétation des vestiges de structures agraires médiévales mais cela suppose

47 Guy 1977; Bazzana *et alii* 1986.
48 Bazzana 1986, 15-28.

d'autres études de cas, dans le cadre d'un travail d'équipe. Il convient aussi de rester bien conscient du fait que, pour l'instant, si la problématique est claire, les réponses ne sont que partielles et que, pour progresser, il conviendra d'approfondir la réflexion méthodologique.

Cependant, telle qu'elle a été menée –pendant une trop courte période et avec des moyens limités– l'enquête réalisée fournit des renseignements utiles et enrichit la réflexion qu'il convient de mener sur les terroirs et les structures agraires du Moyen Age islamique. Déjà, l'étude des *regadío*s de Cieza –et le même résultat pourrait être obtenu en prolongeant la recherche plus en amont, sur le territoire de Calasparra– montre bien la différence entre les deux types de sociétés –musulmane d'abord, puis chrétienne– qui se succèdent dans ce monde rural du moyen Segura. En époque chrétienne, le fonctionnement des communautés rurales s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une société féodale: aussi trouve-t-on de nombreuses traces de l'intervention des pouvoirs d'État –ou, avec les Ordres militaires, semi-étatiques– et des autorités locales, dans le contrôle et l'entretien, mais aussi dans la construction des prises et des *acequias* abandonnées. De la conquête du milieu du XIIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours, les *acequias* sont conçues pour constituer un système continu se développant sur une distance moyenne (qui peut atteindre, dans le cas du Valle de Ricote, plus de 10km de longueur). Il est clair que, si l'on engage des travaux sur de longue distance, il faut aussi envisager l'aide de techniciens et d'ouvriers spécialisés, aptes à calculer les pentes et les gabarits, à construire des canaux en matériaux résistants, à édifier éventuellement des aqueducs etc. L'intervention de l'État est, dès lors, quasiment nécessaire[49].

Au contraire, dans le cadre de petites communautés rurales semi-indépendantes –fonctionnant sur les modes d'une société tributaire, où les responsabilités sont collectives–, les canaux d'époque islamique s'organisent sur de courtes distances et se succèdent, en chapelet, le long du fleuve où s'étendent les zones irriguées en forme d'amande s'effilant là où se trouvait, en amont la prise d'eau, en aval l'exutoire permettant un retour au fleuve des eaux non utilisées. Le chapelet des terroirs irrigués disposés le long du fleuve est à l'échelle du village (*aldea*, *alquería*) ou, mieux, du hameau de quelques maisons, qui s'installe à proximité même des terres mises en culture et qui réclament tous les soins; le système est, de plus, en accord avec le droit des eaux en pays islamique, qui interdit aux paysans de prendre de l'eau en amont d'un canal déjà existant. Ainsi, chaque propriétaire ou communauté doit élaborer son propre système d'irrigation avec sa propre prise d'eau et son propre exutoire à la rivière. Les canaux secondaires à leur tour divisent le terrain en parcelles de largeur réduite (quelque 7m). On peut penser que l'origine de ce mode d'aménagement est liée aux capacités techniques des constructeurs, c'est-à-dire les paysans eux-mêmes: il s'agit d'ouvrages simples, qui ne nécessitent guère de connaissances techniques; les canaux peuvent même être simplement creusés dans la terre; quant aux prises d'eau, elles font appel à la mise en œuvre de matériaux facilement accessibles –le bois (pieux, fascines, branchages divers) et la pierre (galets de rivière, blocaille, graviers, etc.)– qui composent une maçonnerie bien adaptée à son usage. La fragilité en est évidente, mais il n'est pas question de tenter de lutter contre les violentes inondations méditerranéennes et, à Murcie comme dans le Maghreb actuel, on reconstruit périodiquement les ouvrages hydrauliques que les eaux ont pu détruire.

Deux problèmes restent à approfondir: d'une part, celui de l'organisation agraire de ces régions en époque antique (principalement romaine et romaine tardive) et au moment du premier développement du peuplement médiéval, pendant les premiers siècles du Moyen Age, d'autre part celui de la chronologie précise de l'aménagement des réseaux médiévaux: il s'agit sans doute du Xe siècle, moment privilégié de la "révolution agricole" selon L. Bolens.

Le réseau des *acequias* musulmanes fut hérité – mais sans doute dans un état d'abandon et de destruction (partielle) assez généralisé– par les Chrétiens. La remise en bonnes conditions de production n'intervient pas avant la fin du Moyen Age: seule la conquête de Grenade par les Rois Catholiques, en 1492, supprime définitivement les menaces que faisait planer le tout proche royaume nasride sur les terres murciennes. Dans la *huerta* de Cieza, pendant le XVe siècle, avant même que se manifeste le "boom hydraulique" –qui s'initie vers 1480 et se poursuit pendant tout le XVIe siècle– s'organise en une succession de terres irriguées où se développe une végétation verdoyante; la remise en état de la vallée impose le recours à des techniques lourdes et coûteuses, la recherche d'investissements réguliers et prolongés, ce qui, dans la majorité des cas, impose une intervention de l'État. Les irrigations murciennes d'époque islamique étaient d'une tout autre nature: leur origine n'était ni technique ni politique, mais sociale. Il s'agissait, jusqu'au XIIIe siècle, d'une hydraulique sans hydrauliciens, sans spécialiste en hydraulique ni manieurs de capitaux; elle correspondait à la mise en valeur de terres irriguées –selon

[49] Voir l'exemple bien connu de la Acequia Real del Júcar, à Valence.

quelques procédés élaborés et complexes, mais utilisant des techniques simples– par de petites communautés campagnardes.

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Recent developments and future prospects in research into English medieval rural settlements

The Medieval Settlement Research Group has recently issued a new policy statement on all aspects of rural medieval settlements, which includes recommendations for conservation and presentation of sites, but its main concern is to define research priorities. This paper is designed to expand on the points made in that outline of policy. It reviews recent work and advocates future developments, reflecting the thinking behind the Group's formulation of policy, though inevitably it will be coloured by the individual interests of its author.

The policy statement reflects the ever broadening conception of settlement studies, which in the view of the Group should encompass a wide range of sites and landscapes, not just every type of habitation (villages, hamlets, farms, seignorial residences etc.), but also the associated boundaries, fields, water control systems, woods, pastures, communications etc. Although the Group is concerned to focus attention on the medieval period, it recognizes that medieval occupation of a place was often an episode within a much longer period of use of the land, stretching back into prehistory and extending into modern times. In the recent past both survey and excavation has been concentrated on deserted settlements, and there are good reasons for this because these sites provide for the researcher invaluable opportunities to explore a time capsule of medieval rural occupation, undisturbed and unpolluted by modern features. Deserted sites are also more likely to be threatened at the present time with total destruction, making rescue excavation necessary. We are now facing up to the archaeological potential of all settlements, not just the villages which have suffered heavy shrinkage, or the hamlets that have dwindled down to a single farm, but also the still inhabited places, even villages which are now as fully occupied as they were in the high middle ages. The archaeological contexts in such places may have been damaged by modern activity, but they have the advantage of providing evidence about settlements which survived, and therefore represent the successful majority of places which escaped desertion.

The broader view of settlement study involves contributions from the practitioners of a variety of disciplines, not just archaeologists, geographers and historians, but also environmental scientists, place-name scholars, architectural historians, small finds and pottery specialists and many others. As well as striving to make use of every variety of evidence, multidisciplinary study also involves bringing to the subject approaches deriving from other subjects, such as anthropology. We only need to consider the recent work on the distinction between public and private space within houses and villages to appreciate the insights that settlement study can provide into mentality. The full implications of settlement planning for reconstructing the mindset of medieval people, which can in the twelfth century, for example, be linked with other evidence for a new rationality and orderliness in government and religion, is another example of the potential of settlement studies to contribute to intellectual and cultural history.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first two are concerned with defining the distribution of hamlets and farmsteads, and with the analysis of regional differences in settlements and landscapes. The third deals with new insights into the lives of settlements and their inhabitants, including their late medieval decline. And finally research techniques, both methods for gathering evidence and for developing interpretations will be discussed.

1 Understanding dispersed settlement

Most people in medieval England, in common with much of the population of continental Europe, lived in dispersed settlements rather than nucleated villages. This is true of the overwhelming majority in the period before c. 850, as our sample of excavated sites is heavily weighted in favour of small hamlets and isolated farms. The predominance of small and scattered settlement is still the case in the period after the formation of villages, because in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the areas of dispersal in-

cluded most of the west of the country, but more important the south-east, from the Wash to the Channel, where population densities were especially high.

We still do not know enough about the relationship between the early medieval dispersed settlements and those of the later middle ages, but there are sufficient examples to suggest an overall discontinuity. Most known hamlets and farms of the pre-Conquest period were abandoned within that period, and many of the late medieval dispersed settlements seem no older than the villages – their earliest phase of occupation seems to lie between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. This is not to support the older interpretation of the dispersed settlements as part of the process of internal colonisation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, because we no longer believe that vast areas of wood and waste were occupied for the first time at that late date. It seems more plausible to argue that the settlement pattern everywhere went through a great upheaval in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, which led to a general creation of new settlements, not just in those regions which were heading towards 'villagisation', but also in those developing a scattered pattern of hamlets (Dyer 1996).

Such generalisations are however premature, because not enough basic research has been done on dispersed settlements to draw conclusions even for individual regions, let alone the whole country. The listing of medieval settlement sites in our basic sources of information, the county Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs), is patchy and incomplete. Their recording of 'deserted medieval villages' is often very full, though there is sometimes a tendency to describe any site with earthworks of abandoned settlement as a 'deserted medieval village'. For the pre-Conquest period the SMRs usually contain a complete record of finds, including any indications of settlement. But the only type of later medieval isolated settlement which is listed systematically is the moated site, which is of course a valuable source of information, but means that thousands of unmoated farmsteads are omitted.

Gradually local and regional survey projects are beginning to gather the data. Very thorough work on upland landscapes, such as Bodmin Moor in Cornwall (Johnson & Rose 1994) has produced a complete catalogue of sites, and in parts of the lowlands of the county earthworks of abandoned farms and hamlets have been systematically recorded (MSRG 1994, 33). In Suffolk, a county previously thought to be devoid of earthwork remains of deserted settlements, evidence has been collected through an Earthwork Reconnaissance Survey (MSRG 1995, 39-40). Norfolk has long been the scene of research into settlements through intensive field walking of whole parishes, and this plotting of pottery scatters is often combined with documentary research (Davison 1990). Another approach, for which a pilot study has been conducted in Hampshire, involves the use of existing archaeological and historical data and the gathering of information about both nucleated and dispersed settlements from the detailed maps of the early nineteenth century (MSRG 1995, 7-10). Parallel studies have been proceeding in Wales and Scotland, notably a survey of remains of houses and shielings on the Black Mountain in Carmarthenshire (MSRG 1994, 19), and various projects in the Scottish highlands, including the plotting of 'medieval or later' settlements from early maps (MSRG 1994, 7-11).

All of these are welcome initiatives, but the long-term goal must be the assembly of data for whole counties which will enable us for the first time to see the totality of the medieval settlements. This means using a combination of evidence, as no single source of information will be adequate. Earthworks must be recorded both from aerial photography and detailed ground level observation, as the remains of a single farmstead will often escape detection from the air. Field walking is essential for detecting the many sites damaged by ploughing. And the documentary research must include, as well as early maps and county wide records such as tax records, the more detailed local archival material which is likely to mention individual farms and groups of cottages. The documents are especially valuable for establishing whether the existing settlements, most of which will not have early architectural evidence, are of medieval origin.

Only when a larger sample of the country has been surveyed in this way will it be possible to classify the various types of hamlet by their plan forms, which are as varied as village plans, and, like the villages, include both irregular and regular layouts. We will also be in a better position to make judgements about the chronology, origins, development and abandonment of dispersed settlements. Such work will also allow comparisons to be made between regions. One suspects that the present statement that, for example, Kent and Lancashire both have dispersed settlements will need to be reformulated once we have learned more about the details of the distribution and form of their hamlets and farmsteads, as in every other respect the landscape and history of those counties are different. We ought to be able also to observe the relationship between the dispersed settlements and their fields and other resources. At present only a limited number of such sites have been properly excavated. Once their overall distribution has been plotted, it should be easier to make decisions about the preservation of threatened sites, and their excavation in advance of development.

2 Regional differences in settlement and landscapes

The Monuments Protection Programme of English Heritage encountered a real problem in dealing with medieval rural settlements because they were so numerous, and presented so many difficulties in deciding which sites were 'important' enough to merit preservation. Accordingly a research project has been defining regional patterns so that individual sites can be judged in relation to rationally defined regions (MSRG 1994, 12-17). The maps that have been produced, whatever their initial purpose, are of course of significance for settlement studies in general. They are based on nineteenth-century maps, so they contain some data deriving from modern industrialisation, and will be influenced by rural depopulation in late medieval and modern times, but they are reflecting primarily the underlying patterns deriving from the great formative period of rural settlement between c.900 and 1200 or 1250. They indicate the major regional differences, such as the 'central province' cutting across the country from Northumberland to Dorset, in which nucleated villages predominated, and more subtle variations between much smaller districts. Workers in each locality might wish to revise its detailed conclusions, as would apparently be the case for example in the counties of central southern England discussed in a recent volume (Aston & Lewis 1994). Nonetheless it is valuable to have consistently applied criteria being used to define regional differences over the whole country.

The same type of source material, nineteenth-century maps, have been used on a study of four east midland counties, though here the data has been mapped alongside distributions of population, farming systems, and archaeological sites derived from Sites and Monuments Records (Lewis, Mitchell-Fox & Dyer 1997). The comparison between indicators of pre-medieval activity, soil types, population density, agricultural systems, lordship and other variables has been used to sharpen the basis of the discussion of the explanation of the origin and development of different settlement forms, above all between nucleated villages and dispersed settlements, and that debate will no doubt continue.

Perhaps we exaggerate the differences between settlements and landscapes. We are accustomed to use a shorthand classification of 'nucleation' and 'dispersal', though it has always been recognised that in some areas dispersed settlements cluster into hamlets of varying size, and that in others most people lived in single farms. There seem to be many intermediate forms which blur the distinction between the broad categories. Among the various types of nucleated villages some seem more dispersed than others, notably the polyfocal village which has a number of nuclei only loosely connected together. Similarly among the hamlets some seem more village-like than others, notably the various 'rows' arranged along a road or on the edge of a green which, with a little expansion or infilling could be turned into villages (Wrathmell 1994). The rows in particular often have a regular layout, making them resemble even more closely both towns and larger villages. Detailed survey work, and documentary study, throws up indications even in districts where the nucleated village seems to have reigned supreme of isolated hamlets or farms, sometimes on the edges of village territories (Taylor 1995). Some may be survivals of earlier dispersed patterns, others may be new foundations of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.

Perhaps further research into these intermediate forms will help to resolve the still open questions about the local divergences between nucleated and non-nucleated settlements. There is general agreement that the period of village formation (c.900-1200) coincided with that of the origins of 'midland' field systems, the early phases of urbanisation, the proliferation of small parishes, and changes in the structure of estates and forms of lordship. Thereafter the consensus breaks down. Chronology remains a problem, with some researchers emphasising the late ninth century or even earlier, whereas others point to the many village excavations which have produced no dating evidence before the twelfth century.

Discussion of the role of estates and lordship has been given greater precision with the suggestion that peasant settlers were gathered on the 'inland' attached to the manor houses of pre-Conquest estates (Faith 1992). The association between the fragmentation of the primeval estates and village formation has been made doubtful by the growing body of evidence that smaller territorial units existed within the great estates, and that some large estates were being put together at the time that they were supposedly breaking down (Hadley 1996). The idea that villages were born out of the need to reorganise farming systems at a time of expansion and marketing opportunities remains attractive. Villages are closely associated with regular field systems which seem to have emerged by the tenth century, and there is a logical connection between compact groupings of habitations and the efficient exploitation of open fields (Fox 1992). However, the scientific evidence does not seem to show any great expansion in cultivation or signs of environmental stress at this period (Murphy 1994; Bourdillon 1994).

Explanatory models in this field as in others are moving away from heavy determinism towards an

emphasis on mentality and choice. The catastrophe theory, that villages were formed at a moment of crisis when earlier methods of farming collapsed, or when new lordship or state power imposed themselves on a previously loosely organised countryside, is being replaced by the assumption that changes happened gradually through some evolutionary process. The social history of the period could be seen as one in which ties of kinship declined in importance, and when the protective role of the community, encouraged by the state, played a more important part in people's lives. The village, especially in its more regularly planned form, was the material embodiment of community, and expressed an idea about how people should live and organise themselves. Villages developed alongside one another through imitation of models, and the form of settlement helped to define, along with many other features of daily life, the various regional cultures. For example, the great regularity of Dorset settlements resulted in a uniformity of the tofts in each village, and from one village to another (Taylor 1994).

Discussion about village origins was advanced by a well-organised but brief conference session at Leicester in 1992 (Fox 1992), but we have lacked debates on this issue – more the statement of different positions, which sometimes ignore the existence of contrary opinions. Perhaps more direct exchanges of view will develop in the future.

3 Life of settlements, and their development and decline

Although so much thought and speculation has been devoted to the problems of settlement origins, the great bulk of our evidence relates to the functioning and development of settlements, and indeed some of the most innovative work has been done in this field.

Changes in the shape and size of villages was one of the themes of settlement research in the 1970s, but this field of enquiry has been advanced with the application of techniques of plan analysis. Both deserted and surviving villages can be shown to have experienced replanning, the addition of planned or irregular extensions, the provision of greens or market places, or the infilling of such open spaces, as well as more conventional shrinkage or migration (Everson, Taylor & Dunn 1991). A specific problem has been drawing the frontier between villages and small towns, and this was the subject of a conference in which urban and rural specialists exchanged views, and established a remarkable amount of agreement (MSRG 1993, 7-14). In the pre-Conquest period planned towns and nucleated villages were emerging at about the same time – was this a simultaneous development, or did villages imitate urban forms? In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries both villages and towns were planned and replanned, and sometimes the distinction between a market village and a market town with an agrarian dimension in its economy is difficult to draw.

Within the settlements, although relatively few peasant houses have been excavated recently, work continues on their interpretation. Their origin in the Germanic or Romano-British building traditions has formed a dimension in the debate on the size and character of the Anglo-Saxon migrations (Hamerow 1993). In the late medieval period there have been useful dialogues between excavating archaeologists and architectural historians, which began with Wrathmell's reinterpretation of the Wharram Percy peasant houses. The discussion should continue with more certainty now that precise dates of standing buildings have been established, and they can be seen to be securely medieval, and indeed in one pocket of Berkshire/Oxfordshire small buildings in the cruck tradition can be taken back to the decades around 1300 (Vernacular Architecture 1990, 47; 1992, 58)

Standing buildings rather than excavated structures have been used to investigate the use of domestic space, and to interpret the buildings and changes in their form in relation to changing perceptions of privacy and social distinctions within the household (Johnson 1993). More work needs to be done of this type using published house plans and records of the distribution of artefacts. One insight into the social use of dwellings has come from the study of temporarily occupied shielings, which with the help of historical accounts of more recent transhumance allows us to visualise the movement of young people out of the household to create a distinctively transient society on the summer pastures (Herring 1996). Regrettably historians of peasant society, who have access to documentary evidence for families and households which can sometimes reveal such residential arrangements as the provision of cottages for the children who were unable to inherit the main holding, do not relate their findings to the material evidence (Razi 1993).

Environmental studies, for long focused on urban sites, are beginning to make a real contribution to rural settlement studies. The preliminary conclusions are now available on the animal bones from West Cotton (Northamptonshire), a hamlet site occupied mainly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Albarella & Davis 1994). They shed light on rubbish disposal, which contrasts with the pits or collective tips used in towns, as food bones seem to have been

left in the open to be gnawed by an apparently sizeable population of dogs. Comparison between bone assemblages from late medieval rural settlements and those from high status sites such as castles, and from towns, reveal some of the characteristics of the peasant diet, which contained relatively little game, a relatively low percentage of pork, and a high proportion of mutton (Albarella & Davis 1996). There is a growing body of information about animal husbandry and breeding, from the responses to the market for animal products as early as the eighth century, to the development of larger animals at the end of the medieval period.

Botanical studies from the early middle ages continue to add to the data on the extent of cultivated land, which points to considerable regional variations, but which supports in general the idea that the migration period in some parts of the country involved no great upheaval in the agricultural economy (Rackham 1994; Fenton-Thomas 1992). New information about the types of cereals grown, such as the spread of free-threshing varieties of wheat, has implications for farming systems which we have yet to take fully into account (Campbell 1994) Some of best botanical evidence for the later middle ages has come from excavations of moated sites, and there is a wealth of data from sites such as Wood Hall (North Yorkshire) relating to the local environment and the specific activities carried out on the site (MSRG 1995, 36-38). Settlement archaeologists, like those involved in the Wood Hall project, are aware of the need to make the fullest use of environmental data in their interpretations, rather than regarding the specialist reports on bones and pollen as mere appendages to the main task of recording structures and contexts. We expect to gain much more from environmental studies in the future, both through the accumulation of new data, and from developing a dialogue between scholars primarily concerned with settlements and those with expertise in analysing botanical and bone evidence.

A major trend in historical thinking in recent years has been to highlight the effects of commercialisation, on society as a whole, but in particular on the peasantry (Britnell 1993). In the early middle ages agricultural systems were devised in order to give a surplus of animal products, presumably in response to market demand, and this could have been an ingredient in the emergence of divergent forms of fields and settlements in the tenth to twelfth centuries. The growth of more specialised regional farming systems helps to explain the extension of settlement on pastoral uplands or wetlands, especially in the thirteenth century. The involvement of the rural population in industries made settlements viable in places with relatively poor agricultural land, such as the Kentish weald or the forests of Staffordshire. Thanks to new work on the hinterland of London, and on the regional links of provincial towns such as Exeter, we can appreciate the involvement of the inhabitants of rural settlements, such as those on the Devon uplands and West Cotton (Northamptonshire) in the supply of urban markets (Campbell, Galloway, Keene & Murphy 1993; Kowaleski 1995).

The commercial influences on production have left relatively little trace in the material culture of rural sites. It is rather in the evidence for consumption that the archaeological evidence for commercialisation is most striking. Excavators have always appreciated that pottery and small finds originated outside the village, and the widespread distribution of Ipswich ware and Thetford-type ware in East Anglia shows that rural consumers were obtaining the products of urban industries in the seventh to tenth centuries. In the later middle ages we can begin to reconstruct the mechanics by which peasants travelled to small town markets to acquire commodities supplied from more remote points of manufacture. Now we appreciate that a wider range of goods than was previously supposed were acquired by exchange – not just the sea fish of which bones are found on inland rural sites, but also some of the meat represented by finds of animal bones. Building materials, especially timber, are likely to have been bought in many cases, and craft specialists such as carpenters would often have been hired from outside the village.

The decline of rural settlements in the later middle ages can be interpreted also in the context of market relations. This was not a matter just of reduced demand for grain and the increasing market for animal products, but also shifts in the land market, which led to the engrossing of holdings and amalgamation of tofts. The frontiers between private and public space were being renegotiated as village communities and their common fields were converted into farms (Dyer 1997).

The causes of the abandonment of rural settlements at the end of the middle ages has been discussed for many years, but that does not mean that the problem has been resolved. The shift away from deterministic explanations of village creation applies to the study of desertion as well. The new emphasis on dispersed settlements requires more work on their varied history of desertion, shrinkage and survival. The complexity of their history at the end of the middle ages is suggested by growing evidence that new settlements were being created even when the population of the whole country was shrinking or at least stagnant (e.g. Fox 1996).

4 Research methods

As the age of large scale research excavations seems to recede, we need to reassert their value. Large scale excavations in the last decade have not indicated any diminishing of returns: for example West Heslerton (North Yorkshire) has shown that large village type settlements can be found before the ninth century; Westbury/Tattenhoe (Buckinghamshire) revealed the growth and decline of midland hamlets; a market village with distinctive features was excavated at Dassett Southend (Warwickshire); and West Cotton, as well as producing important environmental evidence, threw new light on the relationship between manor houses and peasant settlements.

There is still scope also for thematic studies concentrating on types of site over a large area, like the search for earthwork remains of rural settlements in East Anglia or Cornwall, or identifying agricultural buildings, such as the late medieval sheepcotes of the Cotswold Hills which are also being found in other parts of the country (Dyer 1995), or the documentary research into the distribution of places with distinctive names like the places called 'hide', suggesting the survival of small units of land and occupation even within village dominated regions (MSRG 1995, 19).

The future development of the subject will be well served by large scale survey projects, such as those designed to identify dispersed settlements advocated above, and those concentrated on specific regions like the fenland survey (Silvester 1993) and the valuable work on the reclaimed wetlands of the Severn estuary and Somerset which has revealed the remarkable achievements of Roman drainage schemes, their decay in the post Roman period, and the early medieval programme of drainage and recolonisation (MSRG 1994, 18; Rippon 1994).

The most fruitful results are still most likely to come from the intensive study of carefully selected slices of landscape – large parishes or groups of parishes, which coincide with medieval administrative and agricultural units. These should ideally be subjected to multi-disciplinary research involving teams of specialists, not just in order to recover the maximum amount of all kinds of evidence, but also to interrogate that material from every possible perspective, and to bring to it insights deriving from a wide range of subjects. In that way a lively area of enquiry, concerned with a central aspect of the medieval past, will continue to inform and stimulate us into the next millennium.

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Trade, Rural Industry and the Origins of Villages: some Evidence from South-East England

The origin of English villages has exercised historians and archaeologists for at least one hundred years. Early studies of the subject were much influenced by the German historian, August Meitzen who argued that the villages were found by Anglo-Saxon incomers and replaced the earlier dispersed pattern of Celtic and Roman settlement. He claimed that hamlets and isolated farms persisted in those areas reached late or never occupied by the Anglo-Saxons. This model of settlement development persisted for a remarkably long time, mainly because the means for its examination were not available. It was not until the growth of medieval archaeology during the late 1950s and 1960s that the view that villages were founded within a few generations of the *Adventus Saxonum* became less and less credible. Deserted medieval villages, which were being examined in increasing numbers, rarely showed any evidence for underlying 6th-, 7th- or 8th-century occupation. Many villages indeed showed little signs of activity before the 12th century. At the same time Anglo-Saxon settlements were being discovered on sites which had not been occupied by later medieval villages.

By the late 1970s a new orthodoxy was arising, and was summarised in Christopher Taylor's study, *Village and Farmstead* (Taylor 1983). He took a long perspective, placing the growth of villages within the context of the changing patterns of settlement since the end of the last Ice Age. He argued that villages were not age-old settlements, but the results of particular economic and social circumstances which led to their formation in large numbers, mainly in the period 1100 to 1300. The periods before and after were marked by greater numbers of dispersed settlements. That realisation opened new perspectives on the study of the medieval village. Firstly, it allowed villages to be seen as one of a range of rural settlement types, which included on the one hand hamlets and isolated farmsteads and, at the other extreme, settlements which were little different from small towns. Villages were no longer recognised as the 'standard' type of rural settlement, and other forms as lesser variants. Secondly, it raised questions about what were the particular social and economic conditions which produced village settlements in the period after the Norman Conquest. These were issues which archaeology alone could not answer and it encouraged a new approach which integrated settlement studies into a wider analysis of medieval rural society. In the most recent work two aspects of villages have been examined. Who was responsible for their foundation and planning? And can the variation in the distribution and plan of villages be explained in terms of regional differences?

At an early stage in the examination of English villages their plans had revealed a degree of regularity which could not be explained through the process of gradual development. Many villages had quite clearly been laid out as discrete settlements from the beginning. With the re-evaluation of the date of the formation of villages, it became difficult to determine a context in which the settlement pattern in a parish or vill might have been totally re-organised. It was no longer possible to imagine that the village had been planned by a successful Anglo-Saxon warrior for his followers. In the north of England, where planned villages have been most extensively studied, it was suggested that the new settlements were established after the Harrying of the North, the systematic devastation of the area in the 11th century by the Norman army. The dislocation created by this event would have allowed villages to have been created on new sites according to systematic plans. That context now seems less likely since planned villages have also been found in southern England where there was no comparable devastation. Even in the north, the effects of the Norman armies are now believed to have been less than was once thought.

The underlying assumption, that planned works must necessarily be the results of seigneurial action, has not passed without comment. Were decisions necessarily made by the lord of the manor or his officials? There are many examples of the community of the vill acting independently to reorganise the pattern of fields and to maintain bridges. The creation and planning of a settlement was therefore likely to

have been well within the capacity and authority of such a body (Dyer 1985; Harvey 1989).

The distribution of planned settlements is only one aspect in the regional variation in settlement form which has long been noted. One hundred years ago the historian, Frederic Maitland (1897) published two contrasting maps to illustrate the differences in his study of Domesday Book. More systematic work on the subject has been undertaken over a long period by Brian Roberts (e.g. Roberts 1987; Roberts & Wrathmell 1995) who has sought to classify the settlement forms and identify regional types. Roberts' work, which is primarily descriptive, now offers a tool which has yet to be employed to interpret the variation in settlement form. However, a recent study of settlement in four counties in the East Midlands by scholars at Birmingham has sought to integrate the study of settlement form into a wider understanding of medieval society (Lewis, Mitchell-Fox & Dyer 1996).

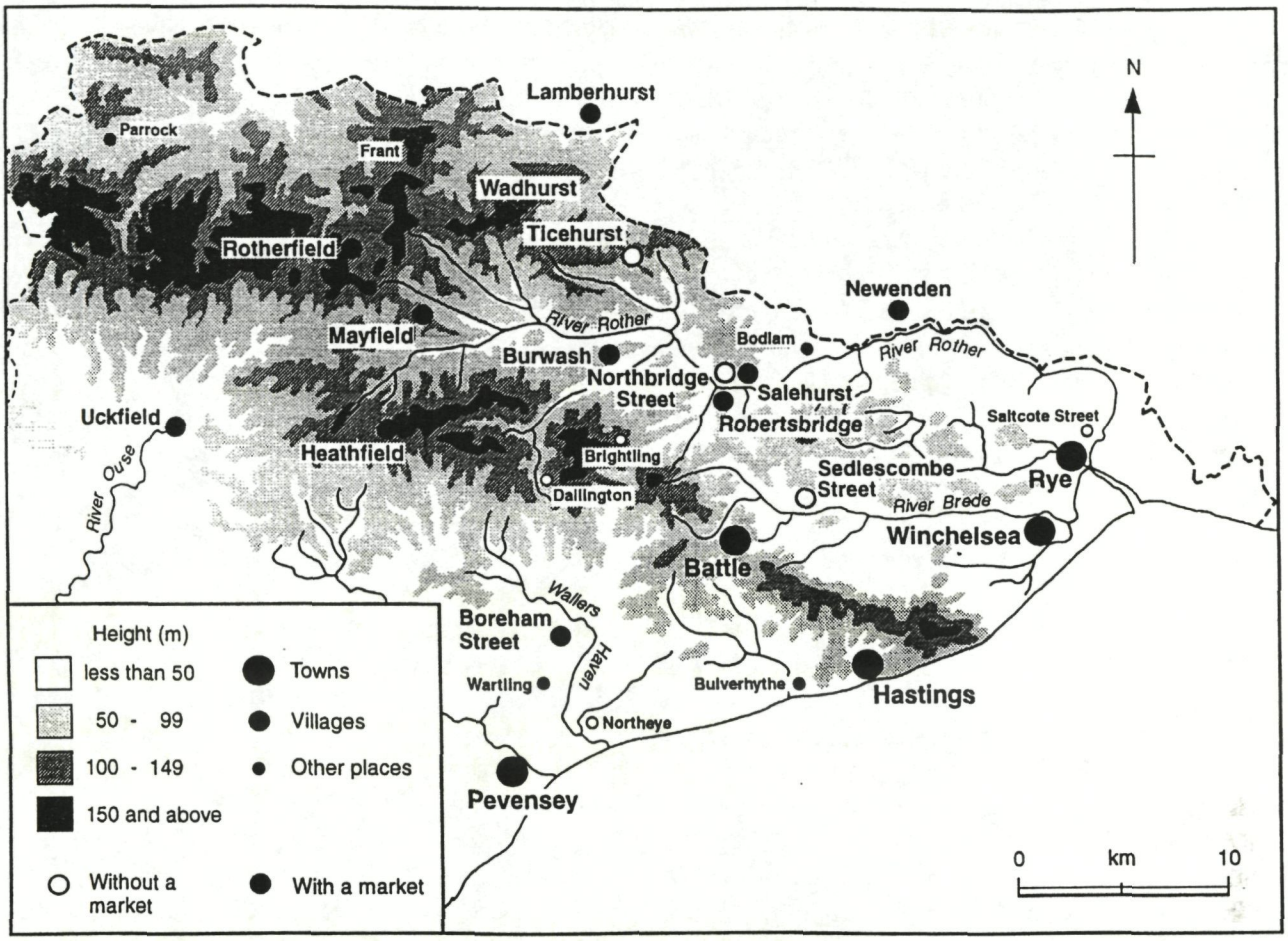
A fundamental problem faced by historians studying village origins is that the process of settlement nucleation happened so early that it is rarely recorded in documentary sources. Detailed local records survive in large numbers from the mid-13th century, but by then most English villages had already been established. It is useful to turn to those few areas of England where village formation occurred at a very late date to gain an insight into settlement change. The process in these places may be recorded in documentary sources, although it cannot be claimed that they are representative of village formation more generally. The fact that villages developed late of itself means that they are likely to be atypical. Nevertheless, these areas may provide some insights into the nature of settlement nucleation, a process which is otherwise poorly understood.

Settlement development in yhe Sussex High Weald

The Wealden district of south-east England is an area of poor soils and relatively late settlement. It still remains one of the most heavily wooded areas in the country, because the soils are generally unsuitable for arable agriculture and in some parts too barren even for good pasture. The Weald can be sub-divided into the High Weald which has the poorest soils and an outer fringe of clay lands known as the Low Weald. Historically, the most wealthy areas of the South-East lay towards coastal fringe. The major towns were either situated on the larger rivers or had developed around ports which served both coastal trade and trade with Continental Europe. Most of these towns had already developed by the end of the 11th century. There were many fewer towns inland, though during the first half of the 13th century new urban centres grew up at, for example, East Grinstead and Hailsham. In the early 13th century the pattern of settlement in the High Weald beyond these towns was dispersed. Isolated farmsteads were surrounded by their own fields and there were extensive tracts of common land (Brandon 1969).

Permissive settlements

Village development took place in the Weald mainly during the second half of the 13th century. Trade in the interior of the Weald was the stimulus for settlement growth and villages grew up particularly at the sites of markets. The sequence here was the reverse of that commonly found in medieval England: trading places developed at unoccupied sites and subsequently attracted permanent settlement. The village of Mayfield exemplifies that pattern. Work probably began on the construction of the archbishop of Canterbury's palace at Mayfield shortly after 1260. The palace was certainly built before 1279, and was further enlarged in *c.*1310 (Davis *et al.* 1969, 10). It cannot be coincidental that a market charter was granted in 1261. The market may not have flourished immediately for no rents from stalls are recorded in a survey of *c.*1285 survey (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 2, 38; Redwood & Wilson 1958, 47-60). The earliest evidence for a settlement on the site comes from a list of 1389. A fire that year swept through the village, and damaged the church and buildings on 85 'shop-places'. The list shows that most tenants held more than one shop-place and it seems probable that the small plots, originally laid out for stalls, had been grouped together to create larger areas for more substantial buildings. In the mid-15th century cottages occupied two shop-places and bigger houses stood on the former sites of three or more stalls (Cooper 1869, 16-7; LPL ED 2068, 1900, 1080; ESRO AMS 5512, ff. 5v., 8r., 10r., etc.). The site, though adequate for the original stalls set out in front of the church and along the street, was inconvenient for a village (fig. 2). The palace and church on the north side of the High Street limited growth; the buildings in front of the churchyard still occupy cramped sites. In the 15th century barns and gardens belonging to those houses lay on the opposite side of the road in 'forelands' on the south side of the street. The land here falls sharply to the south, restricting the scope for development and as result the plan of the village was linear. stretching along the edge of the high ground.



The allocation of the Mayfield rents to 'shop-places' clearly indicates the village developed from an unoccupied site to become a centre of trade and subsequently grew into a settlement. Wadhurst, which lay in the same manor as Mayfield, had a similar pattern of development, though it did not reach the size of its neighbour. Wadhurst was granted a market charter in 1253 and stallage for a market and fair was recorded in the *c.*1285 rental, though there is no evidence for a nucleated settlement at that date (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 1, 432; Redwood & Wilson 1958, 30-47). A triangular market-place in front of the church is clearly identifiable on early 19th-century maps, though by then it was largely infilled by permanent buildings (fig. 3). A timber-framed market hall, which survived until it was demolished in the mid-19th century, also stood within the market-place, suggesting a settlement of some pretension. A survey of 1498 records that some of the 'shop-places' within the market-place were occupied by houses; other dwellings lay immediately in front of the churchyard. Here too the stalls, which had occupied these plots, had been superseded by houses. The largest building plots lay on the land to the south of the market-place. These do not seem to have been planned, regular plots, but had expanded from street frontage backwards and into the existing pattern of fields (LPL ED 1900; ESRO AMS 5512, ff. 34r.-53r.).

The development of Ticehurst village a few miles to the east along the same road was very similar. Early 17th-century maps show a market-place partially infilled with permanent buildings and a market hall. There were further houses on the west side of the market-place and, as at Wadhurst, a number of cottages were squeezed in on the north and west sides of the churchyard (ESRO SAS/CO/D 2; ESRO TD/E 2; ESRO ACC 4683; fig. 4). A rental of Hammerden of *c.*1295 mentions a piece of land in the market-place measuring 52 by 13 feet (15.8 by 4 m), a forge and two other houses. Charters of about the same date granting land to Hastings Priory mentioned two further houses close to the church. A century later Ticehurst was described as a *villa* and there were a number of houses and cottages there which by 1499 had increased to 11 cottages, one shop and some other plots of land (HMAG Priory Ch. 3-6, 13; ESRO SAS/CO/B 71, 72).

Not all such trading places were so successful. Wartling was granted a weekly market at a comparatively late date, 1337, and the first reference to shops occurs in the court rolls of that year. An account of 1340-1 records rents of 3s. and unpaid rents of 14d. and 15d from two other stalls (*Calendar*

of Charter Rolls 4, 431; BL Add. Rolls 32722, 32601). Later 14th-century court rolls show that the shops, a forge and a stable stood around a market-place close to the church, though there is no evidence of any houses. The shops were little more than booths and did not provide accommodation. The largest measured 14 by 10 feet (4.2 m by 3 m). Shops of 7 feet by 5 feet (2.1 m by 1.5 m) and 6 feet by 4 feet (1.8 m by 1.2 m) are also mentioned. The shops were permanent structures for a thief gained access to one through the window of the door of the building. Seven shops are listed in the rental of 1366. From the 1370s onwards the demand was strong and new sites were let for shops and the lord was able to charge increased rents (BL Add. Rolls 32641, 32642, m. 1r., 32692, m. 13v., 32695, 31508, 32693, 32712, m. 2r.; ESRO SHE 7/16; BL Add. Rolls 32691, 32697, 32700).

Mayfield, Wadhurst, Ticehurst and Wartling developed initially as places of trade around a market-place. The first three were on the main ridge-top routes through the Weald; Wartling was on a road leading northwards across the marshes to the upland. The village of Heathfield by contrast had no regular pattern of shop-places, acquired a market charter comparatively late and was apparently not situated on any major roads. In spite of these disadvantages, Heathfield developed as a place of both manufacture and trade. The first extant rental attributed to 1253X62 mentions four shops, one of which lay next to the churchyard. Two of the shops were constructed on former farmland. The rental evidently lists the tenants in a broadly topographical order, for others in the same part of the document, Adam de Ecclesia and Robert Vicar, bear names suggesting their proximity to the church. Other tenants mentioned in that part of the rental include Geoffrey Chaloner, Geoffrey Weaver (*Textor*) who had one house, Nicholas Weaver with one house and 1½ acres (0.6 ha) and Godfrey Mercer who may have lived nearby. It seems probable at this date that most of these surnames were not hereditary, and can be taken to indicate livelihood (McKinley 1988, 56-8, 60-1). Heathfield, therefore, was probably a settlement of textile workers and merchants. The village was not granted a market charter until 1316, when there was an already well-established trading centre (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 3, 306; Peckham 1925, 97; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 47r.).

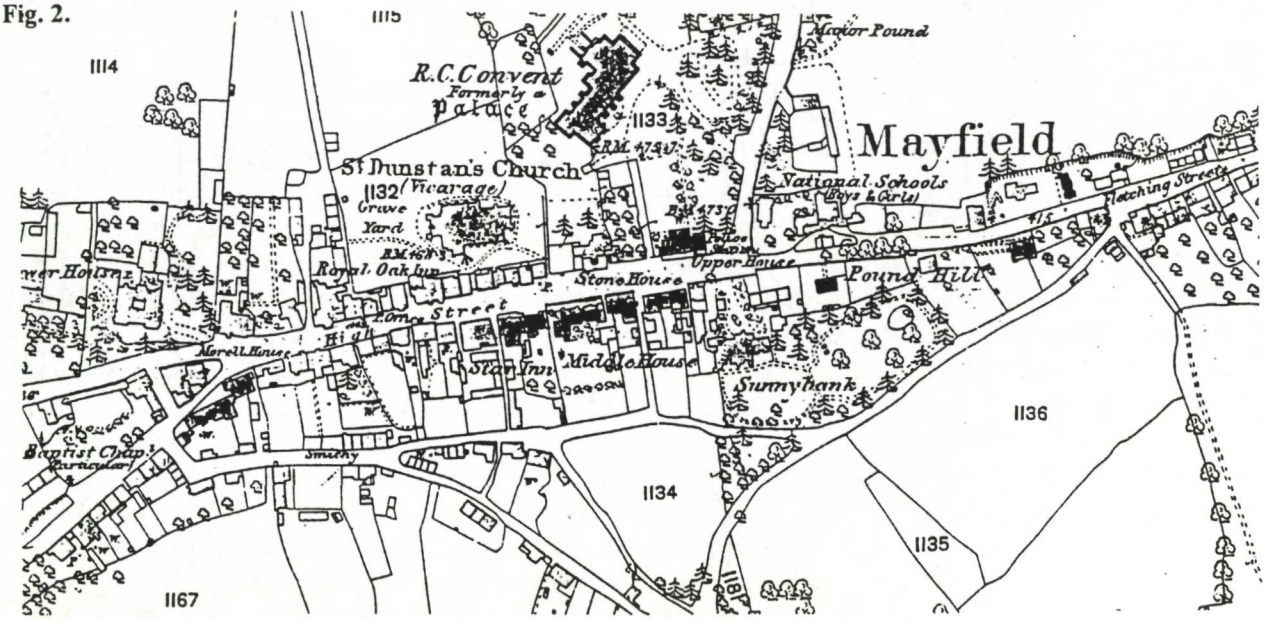
None of the villages considered above may be described as planned settlements in the sense the term is generally used. Seigneurial planning, insofar as it occurred at all, was limited to regularising the plots used for the market stalls and to purchasing market charters. Whether these actions initiated the markets or merely served to encourage the growth of already developing commercial activity is considered further below. It was evidently not the intention of the lords of Mayfield, Wadhurst, Ticehurst, Wartling and Heathfield to found settlements beside their churches. They did not lay out regular plots of a size suitable for houses. The settlements which subsequently emerged were fitted in the restricted spaces available around or at the site of the market. These villages, excepting Wartling where no permanent occupation was established, may be described as permissive settlements. Their development from market sites was evidently not hindered, even if it was not actively facilitated their lords.

The attitude of lords to the development of permissive settlements is well illustrated by the village of Rotherfield. It was situated near on the top of the hill around the crossing point of three routes in the centre of an area of demesne. The tenements 'on the hill' as they are described in a survey of 1346/7 then comprised 34 plots of land with buildings. The lord of Rotherfield made small areas of land available for the development of the village, but very few of the plots were more than a rood or two (0.1-0.2 ha) in extent. A plan of the manor of 1597 suggests that buildings in the village lay in three areas: to the north of the church on the opposite side of the road, to its east around the road junction and to its west. The tenements to the north of the church and those on the east side of the junction appear to have been cut out of the demesne (Brandon 1969, 149; ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO GIL 32; fig. 5). The earliest surviving court rolls of the 1450s mention one rood (0.1 ha) of leased demesne land near the junction which, according to a later annotation, was occupied by house, barn and orchard. Other buildings in the village were constructed on land named *Courtmede*, on the former rabbit warren and on land taken from the highway. Shops were situated close to the churchyard according to a rental of *c.*1500 (ESRO SAS/Aber 84; ESRO SAS/Aber 68).

Planned Settlements

The planned settlements in the Weald, unlike the permissive villages, were intended from the outset to provide housing as well as a site of trade. Their tenements were larger and the villages occupied less restricted locations. Trade was foremost in the minds of the founders of planned settlements, as the early grants of market charters or the urban attributes suggest. For example, the plan of Burwash clearly points to its planned character. The village has a linear plan and stands astride a major ridge-top route through the Weald (fig. 6). A series of tenements ran back from

Fig. 2.



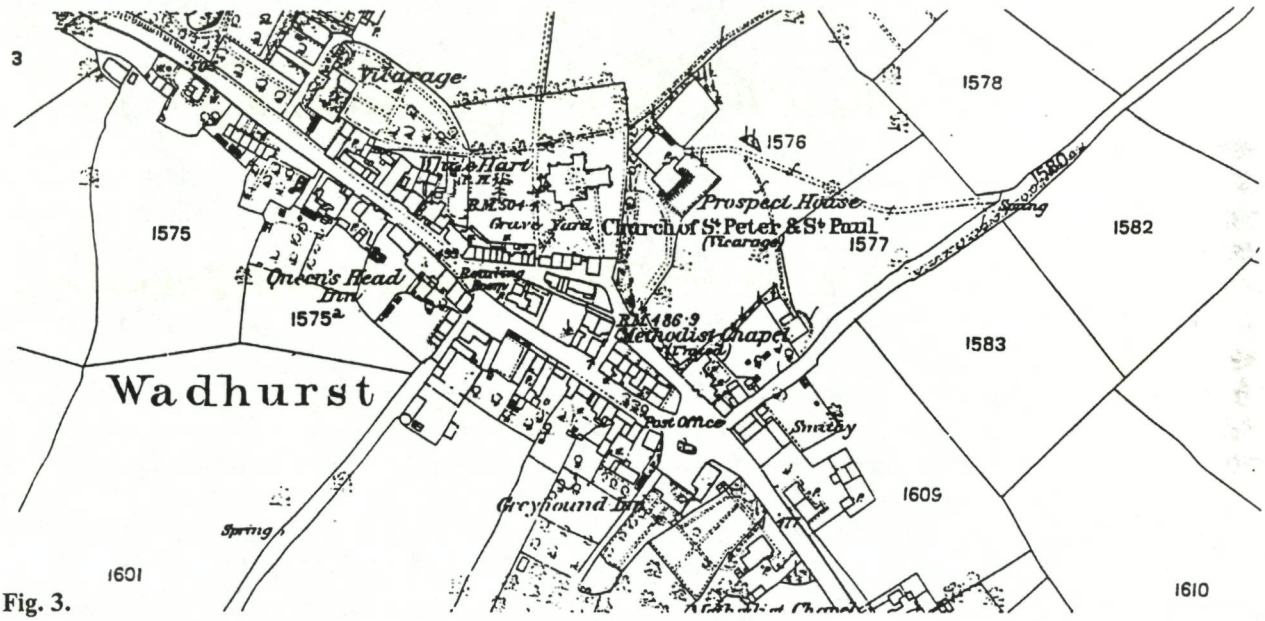


Fig. 3.

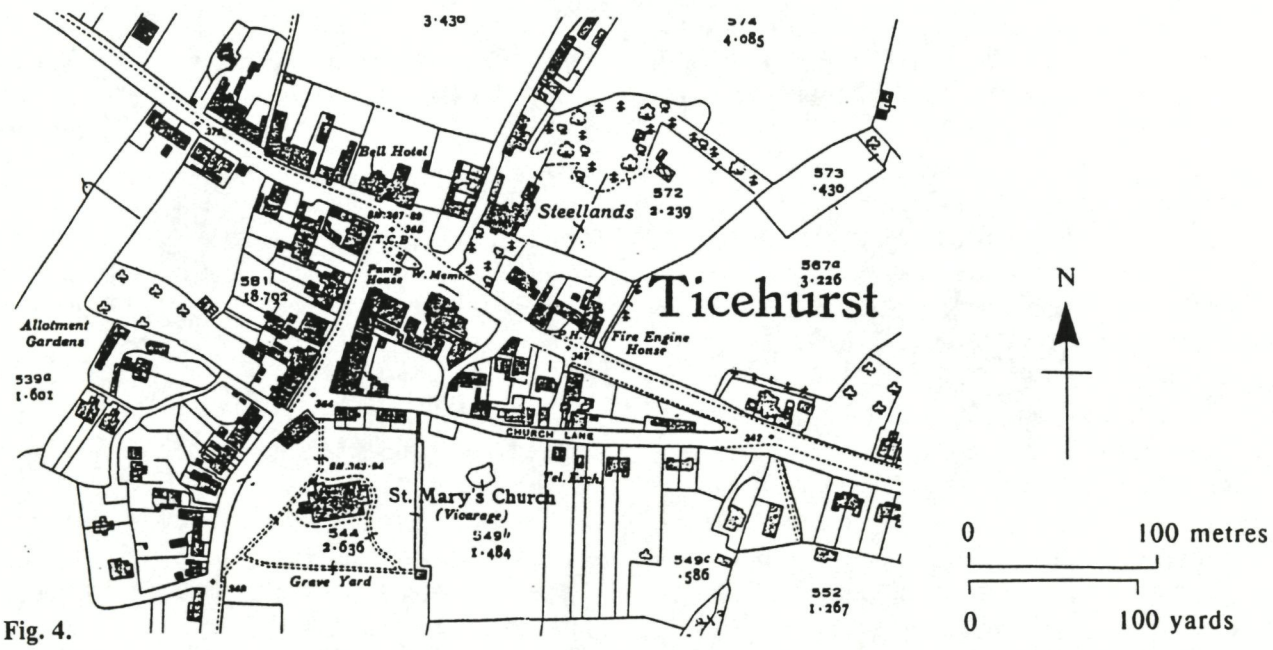


Fig. 4.

the street frontages to a rear boundaries parallel with the road. A market charter was granted in 1252 when the manor of Burwash was in the king's hands and there was certainly a village here in 1329, when seven houses in the *villa* of Burwash were granted to the manor of Woodknoll. There were at least eight stalls in the market-place in 1423 (*Calendar of Close Rolls 1251-3*, 82; Peckham 1946, 354; BL Lansdowne MS. 269, f. 90v.; ESRO ASH 198). Burwash was a demesne manor of the lord of the Rape of Hastings and by the early 13th century was the centre of its administration. The size of the planned settlement suggests that it was intended to be a small town, but, if so, it failed to achieve an appropriate level of prosperity.

Planned settlements are only found within the manors of the larger lords, and in particular those belonging to monasteries. Boreham Street was established by Bayham Abbey and Sedlescombe Street by Battle Abbey, while Robertsbridge Abbey founded a village at Robertsbridge itself. Boreham Street was probably the place indicated as a settlement on the road between Lewes and Winchelsea on the 'Gough' Map attributed to *c.*1360 (Parsons 1958, 2, 16, n. 1). The origins of the village may date to 1251 when the abbey was granted a market and Midsummer fair, however, that right had not been exercised when it confirmed in 1325 (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 3, 479; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1324-27,* 176). A probable starting date of the settlement is suggested by a series of charters from the 1270s recording grants of land between half acre and two acres (0.2 to 0.8 ha) in extent to hold 'in free burgage' (BL Cotton MS Otho Aii, nos 378-81). If the grants in free burgage signified the ambition of the abbot, then he was to be disappointed for there is no evidence that the settlement was ever more than a few houses with a chapel. A late 13th-century rental lists tenants with the surnames Baker, Weaver (two) and Skinner, which may indicate occupations (Ray 1931, 174; BL Cotton MS Otho Aii, ff. 73v., 77v.).

The east side of the small village Sedlescombe Street lay in the lordship of the abbot of Battle, the west in the manor of Bricklehurst. The settlement was situated on the road to Hastings just north of the bridge over the River Brede. In the mid-16th century the whole settlement comprised about 18 houses (Martin & Martin 1979, 71). It may have been a similar size in 1433 when a survey of the Battle portion alone recorded 10 messuages and one garden with a further building. On the east side the holdings were a regular size, each measuring one acre or a half, and paid rent at the rate of 3s. per acre (0.4 ha). There were a similar number of tenements in *c.*1310 and the rents of 1s. 6d. and 3s. mentioned in the court rolls in the 1290s take the history of the settlement back to the late 13th century. No settlement, however, is mentioned in charters of the 1240s recording the acquisition of land by Battle Abbey. It seems that the Battle part of the settlement had been formed during the second half of the 13th century out of part of the demesne field called *Blakelond.* The plan of the west side of Sedlescombe Street in the manor of Bricklehurst is less well documented, but its less regular plan suggests it may have developed organically, taking advantage of the activity on the opposite side of the road (PRO E315/57, ff. 14r.-14v.; PRO E315/56, ff. 5v.-8r.; LIL Hale MS. 87, ff. 56v.-58v.; HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 162, 163, 174; ESRO FRE 520/ii).

The development of the villages of Robertsbridge and Salehurst is more complex than those already considered. It is improbable that there was a significant settlement when the Cistercian monks chose the site of Robertsbridge for their abbey in *c.*1180 for they preferred remote locations for their religious houses. The village is more likely to have developed after the monastery was relocated to *Elham* in the Rother valley to the east (D'Elboux 1944, 7, 124). A grant of a market and fair was made in 1225 during Henry III's stay at the monastery, but was cancelled the following month, because it was said to have threatened existing markets in the neighbourhood.

It cannot be a coincidence that Salehurst and Robertsbridge were granted, or in the case of the latter, regranted, market charters in the same year, 1253, for the two grew up as rival settlements on the opposite banks and two separate crossing points over the Rother valley (*Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, 2, 14, 16; *Placita de Quo Warrante*, 759; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1461-7*, 408; *Calendar of Charter Rolls* 1, 416; cf. Saul 1986, 164-5). The abbot of Robertsbridge had high expectations of his settlement and evidently intended to establish a borough. He withdrew his tenants from the hundred of Henhurst, formed his own hundred and created the posts of constable, ale-conner and street-driver (*Rotuli Hundredorum* 2, 217-8). The names of tenants recorded in a rental of the 13th or early years of the 14th century included Walter Textor (Weaver), Henry and Robert Fuller and Henry Tinctor (Dyer) who may have been textile workers. Walter le Chaper (the Trader), the heirs of Peter Faber (Smith) and Gilbert le Tornur (Turner) are also mentioned (ESRO SHE 7/3; CKS U1475/M242). Thus by *c.*1300 Robertsbridge seems to have been a flourishing manufacturing and trading centre.

The development and subsequent decline of the rival market of Salehurst on the north side of the Rother valley is more difficult to trace. In 1349 its lord, James de Etchingham claimed that the construc-

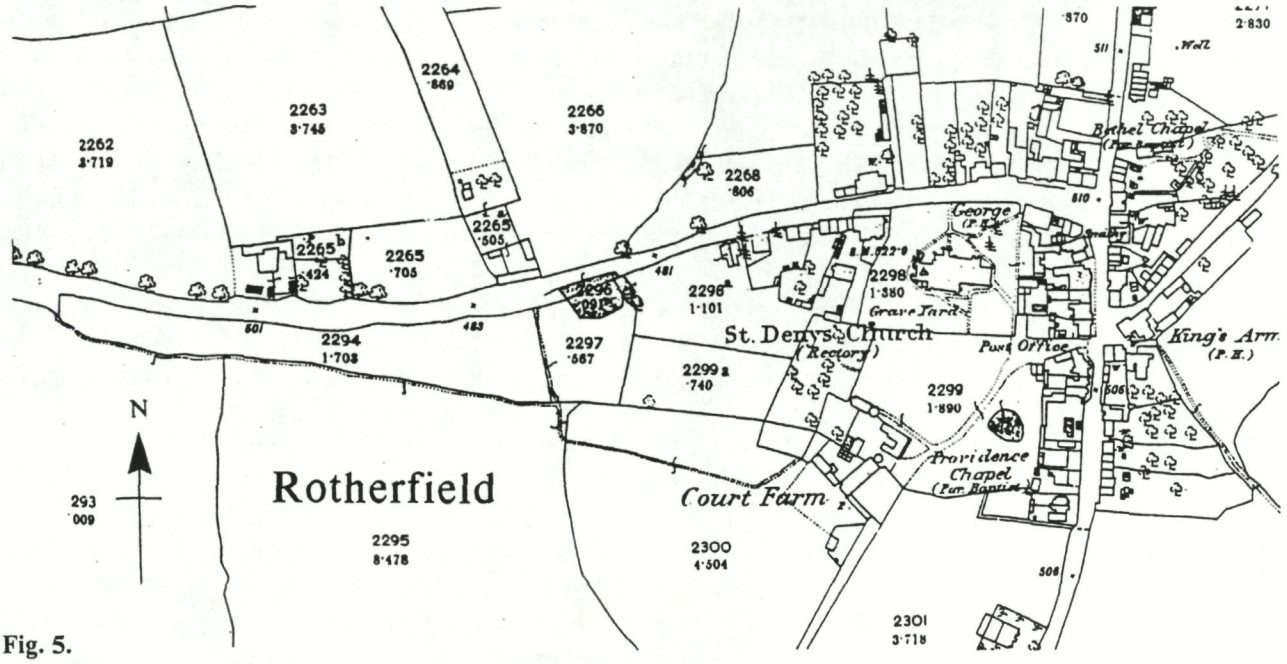


Fig. 5.

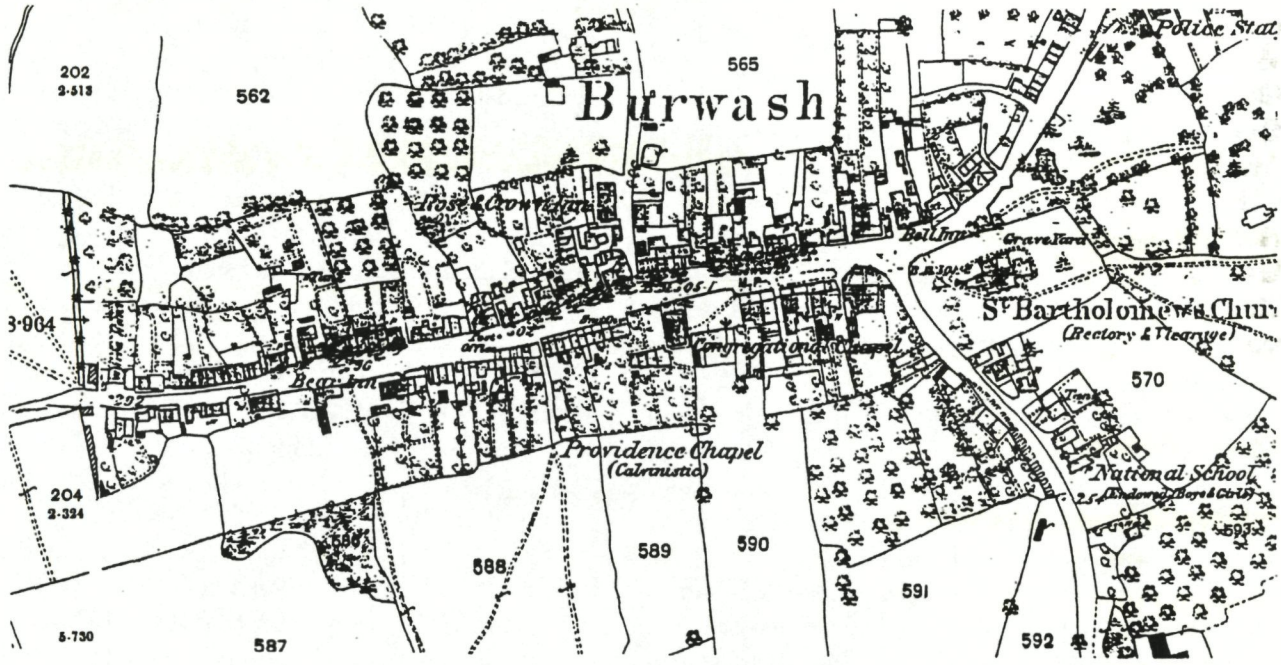


Fig. 6.

tion of a dam across the Rother downstream at *Knellesflete* had restricted the movement of ships and caused the destruction of his 'market town' of Salehurst (*Calendar of Patent Rolls 1348-50*, 78). The assertion was perhaps rhetorical, for the village may already have suffered from competition from Robertsbridge. Whatever the reasons, Salehurst declined into a small settlement, while Robertsbridge flourished.

Some Minor Settlements

The settlement at Bodiam was granted a charter for a market and fair in 1383 but failed to become a flourishing centre (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 5, 281). It was situated on a road leading to a bridge over the Rother, a crossing point which had been used since the Roman period. Four or five long, regularly spaced tenement boundaries may still be traced in the grass behind the 19th-century houses to the west of the castle and the pattern is also shown on a map of 1672

(ESRO AMS 5691/3/1; ESRO BAT 4435 (26)). The settlement is almost entirely surrounded by demesne and was very probably a planned settlement laid out by the lord of Bodiam manor. A likely context for this is the mid-1380s when Sir Edward Dallingridge obtained a licence to crenellate, began work on Bodiam Castle, established a nearby water-mill and obtained his market charter. Dallingridge appears to have invested his profits from the French wars in a model settlement with castle, village, mill and market, but his ambitions were modest with regard to the village: only a small number of tenements were laid out (Whittick 1993, 122; Taylor, Everson & Wilson-North 1990, fig. 4). A final example of a late-established settlement is Dallington which did not obtain a market charter. The first evidence for buildings there is in 1383 when a grant was made to construct a stall on a piece of land measuring eight feet by 10 feet (2.4 by 3.0 m) next to the churchyard. A shop place is mentioned there 50 years later. The site evidently failed to develop beyond a few stalls (ESRO SHE 7/16; BL Add. Roll 32691, m. 5v.; BL Add. Roll. 32716, m. 4v.; ESRO AMS 6270/90/6).

The Pattern of Village Development in the Sussex Weald

Settlements have been divided into two categories, permissive and planned. Seigneurial action played some part in the growth of almost every settlement, whether passively in permitting encroachment upon the highway or the erection of market stalls, or more actively in obtaining a market charter or leasing areas of demesne. However, relatively few of the settlements in this area, compared to those in other parts of England, can be identified as planned. The intention of most lay lords in the Weald was more modest, to foster markets within their manors and so to increase their revenue. The consequence was that when those markets grew into permanent settlements, there was often limited scope for expansion. The planned settlements of Robertsbridge, Sedlescombe Street and Bodiam occupied more spacious sites than, for example, the villages of Mayfield and Rotherfield where land had to be obtained by encroachment upon the highways or through grants of demesne.

The relationship of trading settlements to the road system is likely to have been of considerable importance, although it is difficult to identify the main routes in the Weald, as elsewhere in medieval England. The physical geography of the region dictates that the ridge-top routes were likely to have been major lines of communication, and the most important of these were the ridges running from Heathfield to Battle and Hastings, and the second from Heathfield through Burwash towards Etchingham and beyond. The 'Gough' Map marks the line of a third road from Hailsham through Boreham Street to Battle and Winchelsea (Pelham 1931, 182-4). The settlements located away from the major highways were seriously disadvantaged. It would have been difficult for Dallington to the south of the ridge-top road towards Battle, and Brightling (see below) to the north, to develop into important centres of trade. Some villages succeeded in spite of their location. Heathfield lay some distance from any significant highway, but was well situated for local textile working, craft of considerable importance as the number of fulling mills in the vicinity attests (Gardiner 1996, 134). A location on higher ground above the crossing-point of a stream or river was commonly chosen for the site of settlements. The larger centres of Robertsbridge, Northbridge Street and Sedlescombe Street have already been discussed to which may be added Newenden just over the border in Kent (Graham 1952, 77). Some hamlets in Sussex lay in similar positions. Bodiam and Boreham Street were both located near crossings. The hamlet or small village of Saltcote Street (Playden) lay either side of the road to the ferry over the channel of the River Rother and a chapel stood just beyond the west end of the settlement (Johnston 1967). The free tenements paid a rent of 4d or a multiple of that sum. The place-name suggests that salt extraction was practised and a number of fishing boats were based at the hamlet (Dulley 1969, 42, 56; Sussex Topographical Surveys: Playden Parish (1993); CKS U47/42/M12). Fishing may also have provided the livelihood for the minor settlements at Northeye and Bulverhythe, both limbs of the Cinque Ports (Burleigh 1973, 72; Searle and Ross 1967, 52). The latter place even obtained a market charter, though it never developed into a significant settlement (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 3, 137).

Location may also be invoked as the cause of failure of two Wealden markets. Frant was granted a market charter in 1296, and when a survey was made of the manor in 1635 there were a few houses around the green, including a smithy and one shop-place (*Calendar of Charter Rolls* 2, 467). Other houses on the west side of the green which lay in Rotherfield manor are shown on a map made about 40 years earlier. The location, although on a road northwards to Tonbridge, was not propitious. The settlement was set amid acidic heathland described as 'waste' in the mid-14th century and its hinterland was inadequate to support a market village. Parrock in Hartfield occupied a similar location on the northern slopes of Ashdown Forest. Pottery, the greater part dated to the

13th and 14th century, and iron slag suggest a possible industrial settlement (Tebbutt 1975). *Quo Warranto* proceedings of 1279 record the claim of a market charter suggesting the aspiration to establish an altogether more ambitious settlement, but proximity to the town of East Grinstead and the poverty of the soils in the surrounding area seem to have prevented its development (*Placita de Quo Warranto*, 754).

The villages and hamlets of the Weald may in some senses be regarded as substitute towns. They supplied to a limited area those goods which otherwise would have to have been bought at the predominantly coastal urban centres. This is particularly apparent by examining the villages and hamlets in this area (fig. 1). The distribution shows a marked concentration inland away from the larger towns. Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye in the south-eastern corner of the county evidently dominated trade and manufacturing in their vicinity to such a degree that they prevented the growth of rival markets. The smaller settlements inland served the needs of communities beyond easy travelling distance of the coastal ports. A number of the planned settlements were seemingly founded with the intention of creating urban centres. The urban officials at Robertsbridge, the tenements held in free burgage at Boreham Street and the plan of Burwash have already been mentioned. The settlement of Lamberhurst over the border in Kent was described as a town in the late 13th century, the extent of which was delimited by two crosses (*Placita de Quo Warrante*, 364). All these effectively were failed towns, though they flourished as villages with some urban attributes.

The discussion has shown that the period 1250 and 1300 was crucial for the development of the network of markets and villages in the Weald. Markets established later generally failed to flourish and their associated settlements did not develop into places of any significance. The example of Wartling has already been discussed and Brightling, which lay further north, is a further instance. Two stalls are recorded at Brightling in 1422-3, when one was no longer tenanted and the other below the churchyard paid a reduced rent. A fair held there in the early 15th century produced a very small toll and was evidently of little commercial significance. It was described in 1472 as a *vicus* or hamlet (ESRO ACC 3612/5, unlisted roll 5; ESRO ASH 198, 200, 200A; BL Add. Roll 31359).

The development of villages in the Weald has been traced from the mid-13th century using documentary evidence. There is little written evidence before that date, although some conclusions may be drawn from analysis of the topography. It has been argued that many villages developed around the site of a market-place adjoining a church. The churches at Ticehurst and Wadhurst were situated at the side of the market-place, set back from the main road. The areas which came to be occupied by the markets must therefore pre-date the foundation of the churches, taking them back before *c.*1100 by which time most of the Wealden churches had been established. At Rotherfield the situation is rather different. The church stood at the eastern end of a clearly defined funnel-shaped area of land and indeed appears to have been founded within it. In all these places the churches were evidently secondary to the existing open spaces. These open areas or 'focal places' appear to be very ancient and may have served as meeting points or trading places long before churches were established.

Trade, industry and village growth elsewhere

Trade in much of medieval England developed around existing settlements, and in turn encouraged their growth. However, Salzman (1928, 207-208) has drawn attention to assemblies (*congregationes hominum*) which took place to trade in an informal manner. He cited the example of a Sunday gathering in the late 13th and early 14th century at Crosthwaite church near Derwent Water in Westmoreland at which people came together to buy and sell corn, flour, peas, beans, flax, yarn, meat and fish. This was not a regularised market because no toll or stallage was paid, nor apparently did it take place at a village. The Crosthwaite gathering must have resembled many early markets, which were not regulated, but took place spontaneously when people were gathered together at church. Sunday was the most common day for markets before the early 13th century when under ecclesiastical pressure many changed to a weekday and moved out of churchyard (Britnell 1993, 84-85).

The development from *congregationes* to licensed markets and their associated permanent settlements may been very much more common than documentary sources suggest. Unregulated trade on sites without settlement will rarely attract documentary notice. The markets of the Sussex Weald and at Crosthwaite discussed here may be unusual only because they were very late examples which left some trace in the written record. The pattern in Essex seems to have been very similar to the Sussex Weald. In both counties villages contained many who derived their living from craftwork (Gardiner 1996; Poos 1991, 36-37; Hilton 1977, 172-174). Both had high density of markets, 5.1 per 100 sq. miles in Essex compared to 5.5 in the Rape of Hastings at the eastern end of Sussex (Britnell 1981b, 210). The develop-

ment of village settlement has yet to be examined in Essex, but the present study may be instructive.

The origin of village is unlikely to have a monocausal explanation. The growth of nucleated settlement took place over a number of centuries as the economy of England was undergoing very rapid change. Trade and craftwork were one of the factors which stimulated settlement nucleation. As such the historical and topographical evidence from the Weald is informative not merely about the growth of villages more generally, but may provide insights into the way towns developed in England at an earlier date.

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CKS Centre for Kentish Studies (Maidstone)
ESRO East Sussex Record Office (Lewes)
HMAG Hastings Museum and Art Gallery
HEH Henry E. Huntingdon Library (San Marino, California)
LIL Lincoln's Inn Library (London)
LPL Lambeth Place Library (London)
PRO Public Record Office (London)
WSRO West Sussex Record Office (Chichester)

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Medieval Settlement in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) is widely recognised as expert in the detailed field survey of the earthwork remains of medieval settlements, exemplified in projects in Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire (RCHME refs). This paper describes work that was carried out in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (fig 1) in England to investigate a new approach to the study and recording of medieval settlements within RCHME. This paper provides a review of the aims and methods used and describes some of the results of the work in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Aims and Principles

In England, a long history of archaeological investigation into medieval settlement sites, combined with a wealth of documentary evidence and maps means that a considerable amount of information regarding medieval settlements exists. However, these various strands of evidence have too often remained separate, which has limited their ability to increase our understanding of the nature and evolution of settlement in the middle ages. Furthermore, this separation of historical and archaeological evidence has resulted in the omission of many documented settlements from record systems designed to identify and protect historic sites.

Recent RCHME work in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was intended to address these problems by bringing together and assessing archaeological, historical and geographical evidence for medieval settlement over a wide area. The approach develops that used in recent Birmingham University research into medieval settlement in the east midlands (Lewis & Mitchell Fox 1992, 1993; Lewis, Mitchell Fox & Dyer 1996). The approach was firstly to create a database with a separate record for every known medieval (410-1540 AD) settlement, and secondly to analyse and map the database information to identify and study patterns in the development and pattern of settlement in the medieval period.

The methodology devised for the project required that the database record for each settlement should include a range of historical, archaeological and geographical data, which would enable the extent of knowledge about each place to be immediately apparent and its likely character, status and type to be assessed. Following completion of the database, information on it had to be mapped, analysed and interrogated to produce a descriptive and interpretational review placing the evidence in its wider context. One of the strengths of the approach was that it could cover a large area rapidly, so that any county would take just three months to complete. Following completion, the database information had to be supplied to national and local archaeological record systems so that the information could inform managerial and research initiatives. A detailed account of the findings also had to be prepared and a summary published in the annual report of the Medieval Settlement Research Group (MSRG).

Project methodology

A number of different archaeological, architectural and documentary sources were used in the pilot, which was conducted by two full-time staff (one historical researcher and one archaeological investigator) and one part-time volunteer with no previous experience who helped with data inputting. Field assessments were carried out over one week by one archaeological field investigator. One of the benefits of the approach used in the Medieval Settlement Project was the speed and economy of effort with which it could produce useful results.

The project comprised six main areas of activity summarised below. 1-3 and 5 were carried out in succession, concurrently with 4 (historical research). 6 (analysis) was carried out following completion of 1-5.

1) Historic place-name data input

The first task undertaken was the entry to the database of all documented historic places likely to have been settlements in the medieval period (410-1540 AD). One of the major inadequacies of existing heritage records (NMR and SMRs) is that most medieval settlements which are of documented medieval date but for which no archaeological evidence has yet been recorded are omitted. One of the aims of the Medieval Settlement Project was to remedy this deficiency.

For each place documented before 1540, eight items of information were input to the database as the first stage of the pilot. These comprised the modern place-name, the earliest form or spelling of the name, the meaning of the place-name, the date at which the name was first documented, the national grid reference (if identifiable, to six figures), the modern parish and county within which the place lies, and the project database record identification number. This created 2,289 records on the database and took 12 working days to complete.

Place-name surveys compiled by Kokeritz (1940) for the Isle of Wight, and by Gover (unpublished typescript 1960) and Coates (1989) for Hampshire provided information for this stage. Modern Ordnance Survey maps at 1:50,000 were used to locate these places and provide grid references. Some additional grid references were found from 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps. Despite this fairly intensive effort, not all places could be located: some are only named on 1:10,000 maps, others only on older 6" maps, and others are even more obscure. Limited time did not allow the examination of any of these maps for missing grid references, consequently c. 500 historic places on the database still lack complete grid references.

2) Archaeological data

Four main sources were used to identify the physical evidence for medieval settlement in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, namely the Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) for each county, the National Monuments Record (NMR) held by RCHME and the archive of the Medieval Village Research Group (MVRG). All of these records are now at least partially computerised, but have been built up cumulatively over a period of time, and in most cases each newly discovered piece of information has been added as a separate record as it comes to light. Thus a standing medieval building is likely to be recorded in a separate record to an excavated building or a medieval pottery find from within the same settlement: rarely is such a place classified anywhere as a settlement. The archaeological evidence for medieval settlements is presently very dispersed and is thus almost impossible to identify, retrieve, quantify or assess. One aim of the RCHME research was to collate and synthesise this disparate information and create supplementary records of settlements. Each of these would show the range of evidence for the whole settlement, enabling the level of knowledge about each place to be immediately apparent, and its likely character, status and type to be easily identified.

i) SMRs:

The Hampshire SMR provided a print-out of all medieval (410-1540 AD) records classified under the following categories: farm, moat, manor, settlement site, building material, finds, cruck-framed building, hearth, house platforms, occupation hollows, pottery finds, kilns, sunken-floored buildings, parish church, deserted village, shrunken village, village and chapel. It was hoped that this would retrieve all records likely to contain settlement data (the large number of terms which had to be used to recover settlement information illustrates the problem of trying to identify settlement information in existing record systems). The printout (including the descriptive text) was searched thoroughly and all information about medieval settlements was collated, synthesised with the place-name data and input to the database.

For the much smaller county of Isle of Wight all records of early or late medieval date were rapidly scanned for settlement evidence at the County Archaeological Unit, following which a full print-out of all records found to contain information relevant to medieval settlement was provided for detailed assessment and entry to the database at NMRC.

ii) NMR:

From the NMR a short print-out of all records of medieval date (including both archaeological and architectural records) in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was obtained. This was scanned to identify all evidence indicative of medieval settlement, which was then collated and added to the database.

iii) MVRG:

A printout of the indexed information from the MVRG (held by RCHME) was used to cross-reference sites which had been recorded by the Medieval Village Research Group. The detailed archive information (which has not been computerised) was rapidly reviewed for relevant information regarding extent of earthwork remains.

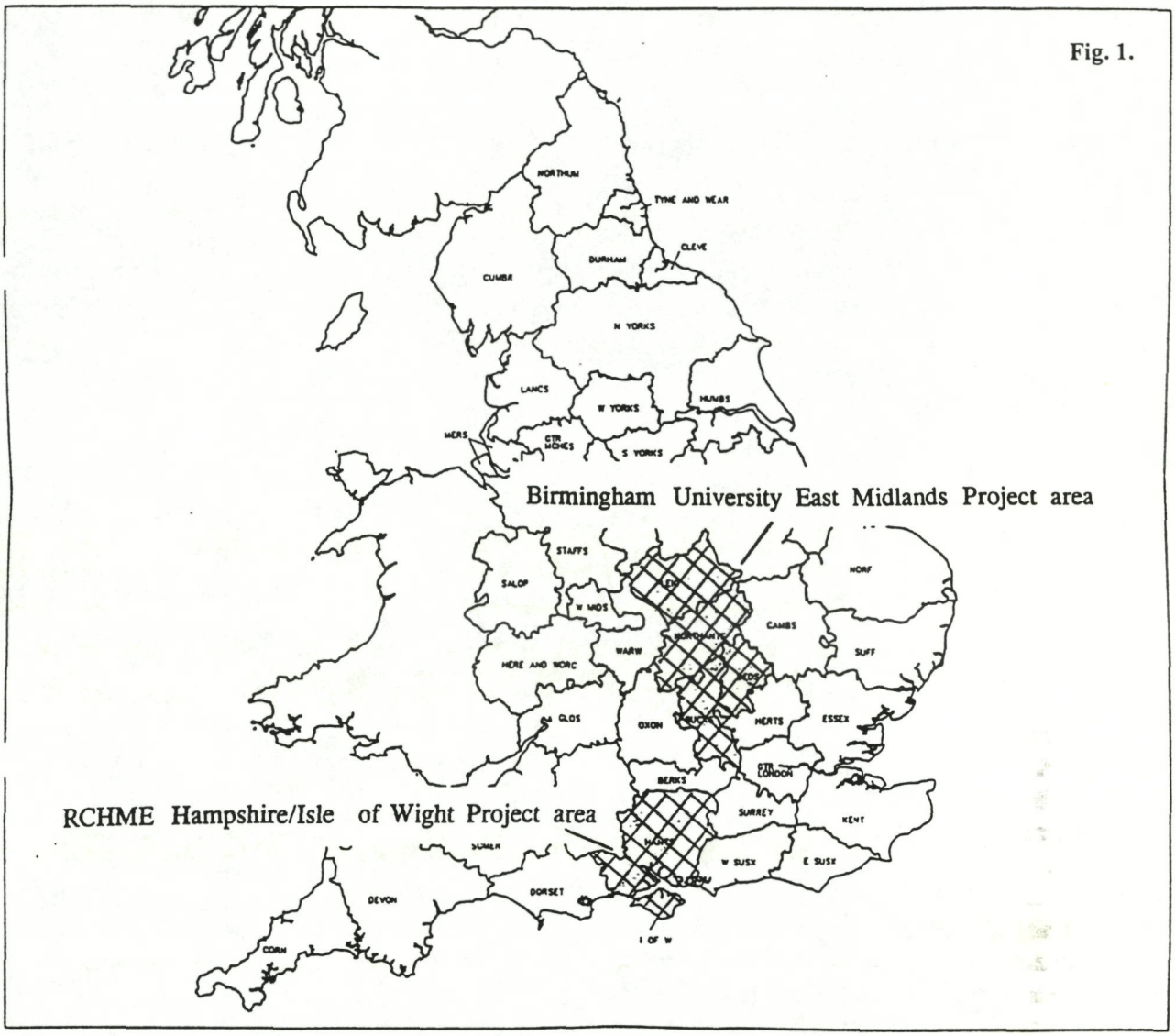


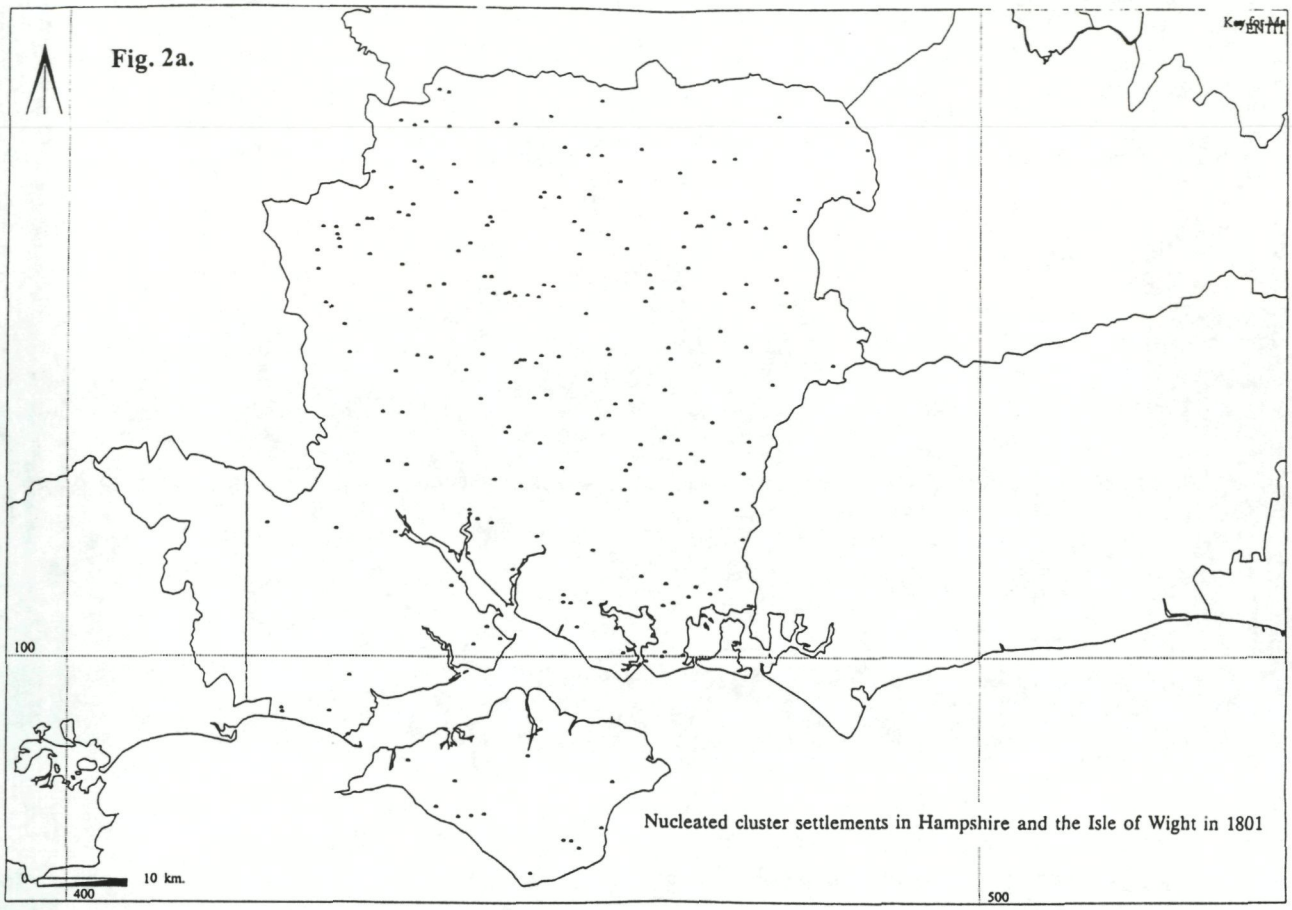
Fig. 1.

As the aim of the pilot was to identify, review, collate and assess the evidence for medieval secular settlement, information about standing domestic buildings of medieval date was included, and in some cases this provided the only physical evidence to support the documented medieval date of a settlement. The presence of a medieval church was recorded as an associated monument, but was not assumed necessarily to indicate the certain presence of a settlement. Pevsner and Lloyd's survey of the buildings of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (Pevsner & Lloyd 1967) was used to establish the date of some churches and other buildings where this information was not included in the SMRs or NMR. Information about other types of medieval buildings such as religious establishments, castles, hospitals etc was only included if the sites lay within settlements, in which case they might have affected the status and development of the settlement.

Any of this information which related to places recorded during the place-name data survey was added to the database record for that place. Any evidence about a site not already on the pilot database was added as a separate new record. Approximately 270 new settlement sites were added to the project database from evidence contained in the SMRs and NMR. Any additional information necessary to clarify or support the archaeological evidence was included in the free text memo field. Work collating and synthesising the pertinent information from the major existing archaeological records took 16.5 working days.

3) Nineteenth century settlement form

With the exception of deserted or very extensively shrunken settlements, historical and archaeological information reveals little or nothing about the size or layout of medieval settlements. However, an understanding of the likely morphological form of settlement in a region is often crucial in establishing its archaeological potential. For example, a place with a



large documented medieval population which now exists only as a single building may reasonably be posited as the possible site of a deserted medieval village if it is in an area where all other surrounding settlements are nucleated. If, however, all neighbouring settlements are of dispersed form it is more likely that the medieval record of a population under a single place name represents an administrative convenience. In this case it is unlikely that the named place was ever a large nucleated settlement, but was perhaps merely the site of the manor house with the peasant/tenant tofts scattered across the settlement territory.

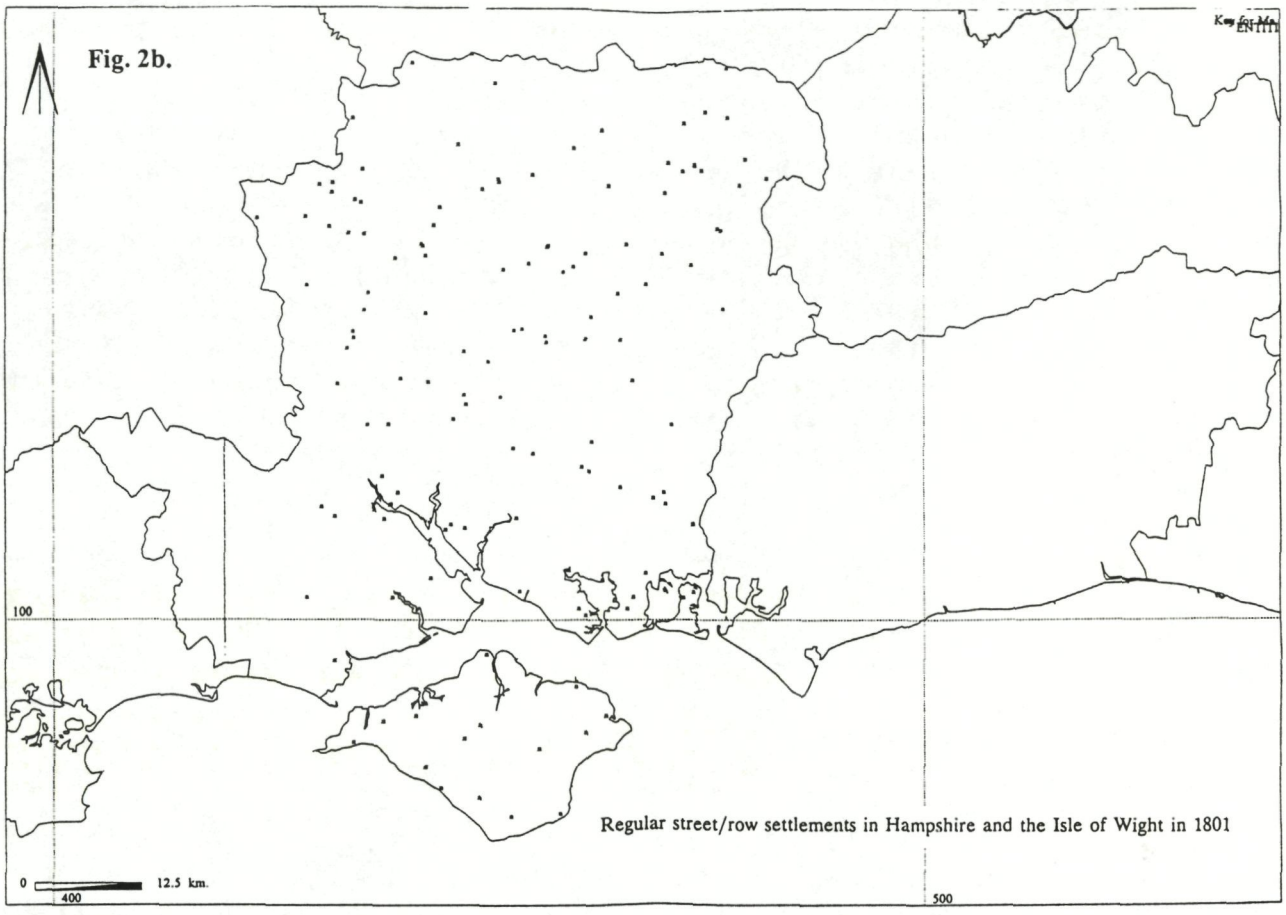
The source used to characterise the form of the places recorded in the pilot project was the first edition 1" Ordnance Survey (OS) map published for the region by Colonel Mudge in 1810. This was selected because it was the earliest map which provided consistent and reliable coverage across the whole of the pilot area while also providing an adequate degree of detail. Earlier maps at the County Record Office were of insufficient detail, quality or coverage. (This OS map also confers an advantage for the future in that it covers the whole of England, allowing for consistency across a national project)

For each historic place recorded on the pilot database from the place name survey and the archaeological records which could be identified on the 1810 OS map (a total of 1,518), the form of the settlement in 1810 was entered onto the database, using a simple range of morphological types which included compact/nucleated cluster, regular row, interrupted/irregular row, common-edge settlement and isolated farmstead. These (with the exception of isolated farmsteads) were subdivided into small, medium and large settlements, so that a cluster of less than 15 houses was classified as a small compact/nucleated cluster, rather than a hamlet, avoiding use of that term which has never been firmly defined.

In the course of the 1810 map survey a number of other places were noted which, despite the apparent lack of historic place-name evidence for their medieval existence, seemed likely on other grounds to have formed part of the medieval settlement landscape. A total of 193 of these were added (with the standard data range of name, parish, NGR etc data) to the database as new records, classified as settlements of post-medieval (but not medieval) date.

4) Historical Data

Most of the historical data examined related to levels of population, wealth and agricultural development, but also included simple types of information (where available) about the economic and institutional status of settlements and also the agrarian



organisation associated with them. This information substantiates the record created from the place-name and archaeological sources, and enables the varying size and importance of the recorded settlements in the medieval period to be identified, assessed and compared locally and regionally. Additional data relating to other aspects of settlement such as social and manorial structure was also reviewed and provided additional background information for the final synthesising report but was not included in the database because of its less reducible character.

i) Domesday Book:

Domesday Book was used to extract and collate data pertaining to settlement for three categories:

1. Tenurial – including the number and size of holdings and the type of lord (royal, lay or ecclesiastical).
2. Agrarian and economic resources – including the numbers of ploughs (separated into demesne and tenant) and the extent of other resources including meadow and woodland.
3. Population – the number of people recorded at each place according to their various categories.

The total of all recorded plough teams and population, and an adjusted population figure (allowing an average of 4.5 people per recorded family for all categories except figures for slaves which were assumed to represent individuals) were then calculated for each ecclesiastical parish to allow the mapping of population densities across the region. Some additional calculations have also been made using the Domesday Book data, including the relative proportions of demesne and tenant plough teams for each place, and the numbers of slaves and their ratios to demesne ploughs (there has been speculation that this should be 2:1, indicating that slaves acted as demesne plough men, but unusually, this is often much higher in Hampshire). The data for population, lordship and ploughs was input to the database. Other information was used to produce county distribution maps and to inform the county report. The time taken processing the Domesday Book data was three weeks.

ii) 1327/1334/1428 lay subsidies:

The second task was to collect and synthesise data from the lay subsidies of 1327, 1334 and 1428. The 1327 subsidy was chosen because it is the earliest (and appears to be the only) record for Hampshire to provide lists of named tax payers for each place. As this roll has never been published the original, held in the Public Record Office was examined. The numbers of tax-payers listed for each place were counted and the overall tax assessments recorded. The names of the individuals were also scanned for evidence for additional contemporary settlement sites or other topographical information. These were added to the database.

The 1334 subsidy, though only listing the total sums paid by each settlements (rather than listing sums paid by individuals) was included in the pilot because it is one of the few medieval taxation records providing local evidence surviving for the whole of the country, and will therefore be important for making comparisons within the national project. The published edition of the 1334 data was used for this (Glasscock 1975). The figures for 1327 and 1334 were input to the database for each settlement and totalled by ecclesiastical parish to enable the densities of population and taxable wealth to be mapped across the region. The time taken collecting and processing the fourteenth century taxation data was two weeks.

The list of parishes with less than ten households in the lay subsidy of 1428 is a useful indicator of those settlements which were particularly small after the Black Death, particularly in Hampshire where the 1377 Poll Tax returns are not available. This information was also input to the database.

iii) Nomina Villarum:
Data has also been taken from the 1316 *Nomina Villarum*, providing evidence for the whole county of the number and type of lords then holding land in each vill.

iv) 1524 lay subsidy
The latest taxation records employed were those of the Lay Subsidy levied in 1524-5 (Sheail 1968). The numbers of tax-payers for each place were assessed and input to the database and calculated by parish for mapping purposes in one week.

v) Settlement status
The identification of evidence relating to the status of settlements in the early or later medieval period involved trawling a miscellaneous collection of sources, in a more speculative search for evidence about institutional and economic status and agrarian organisation. Examination of pre-Conquest sources, including charters and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, allowed identification of Anglo-Saxon royal vills, assembly sites and minsters. Post-Conquest sources examined include the calendars of royal charter rolls, the Victoria County Histories (VCH 1900-1912) and Beresford and Finberg's handlist of boroughs (Beresford & Finberg 1973), which has produced a list of over sixty medieval markets, boroughs and fairs. All Hampshire cartularies readily available in print have been scanned, principally for evidence of field systems, as well as additional evidence relating to settlement status. Published manorial records have helped illuminate social structure and the agrarian economy.

5) Field Assessment

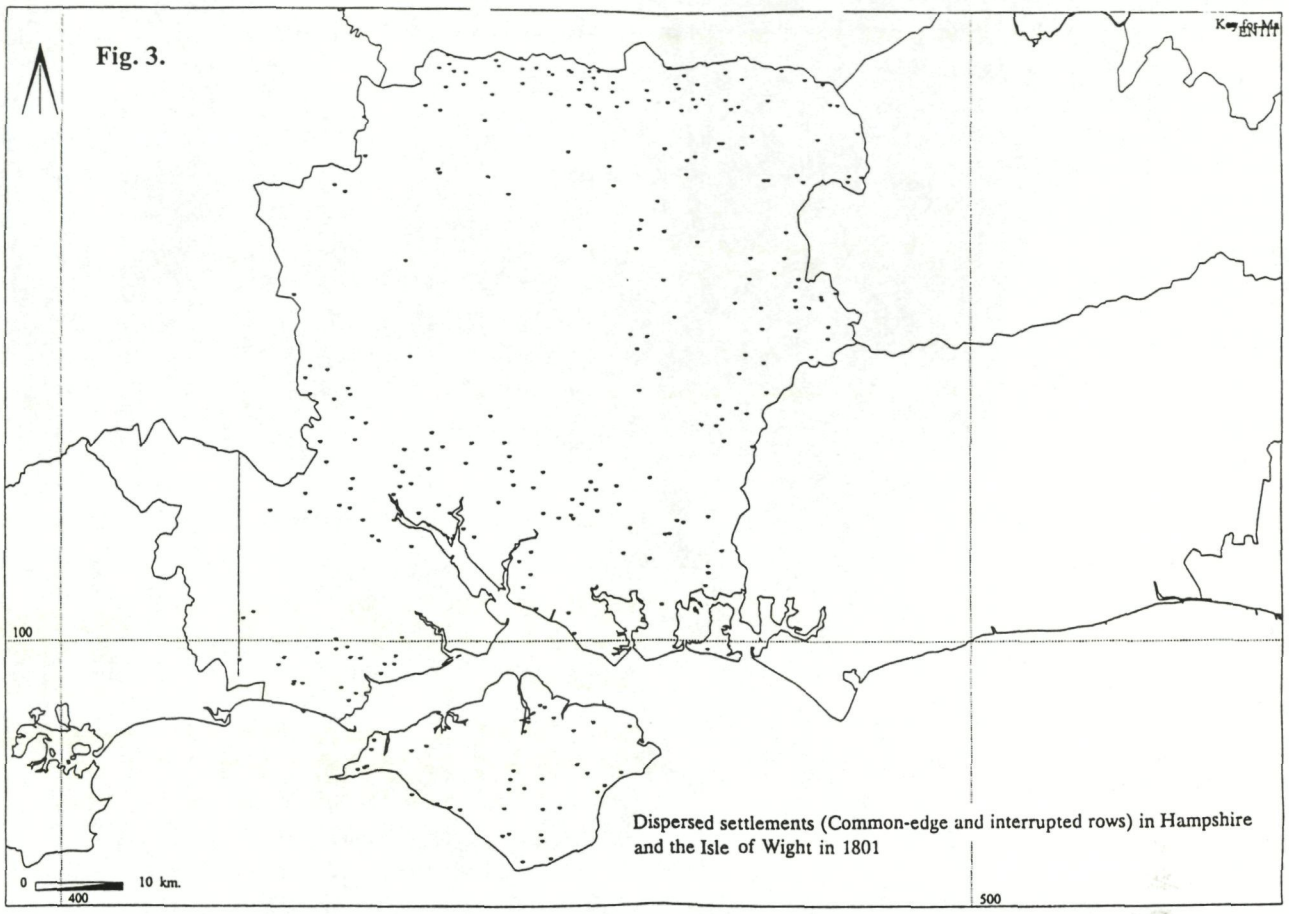
56 sites were selected for field assessment to ascertain the presence and extent of earthwork remains of former settlement. Most of these were historically attested sites in dispersed regions, which were revealed by the desk-top survey to be particularly poorly understood and often classified inaccurately or on inadequate evidence. For example, many sites have in the past been classified as deserted villages from historical sources alone, and it is now recognised that many places in non-nucleated regions which are documented as having taxable populations may have been merely the site of the manor within an area of scattered hamlet and farmstead habitation and never existed as nucleated villages: such sites require field verification to establish whether there really is any physical evidence for more extensive former settlement – if none is evident, such sites should not be classified as deserted or shrunken villages.

6) Analysis

Following completion of the data collection and database entry, maps were generated from the database using a computerised geographical information system. This facilitates evaluation of the geographical distribution of various settlement phenomena, such as dispersed and nucleated settlement types, deserted and shrunken settlements. It is possible to produce distribution maps of any query carried out on the database. The potential of this for the study of medieval settlements is only just beginning to be explored (Lewis & Mitchell Fox 1996, RCHME in preparation). All collected data was analysed using the database and maps – these are, independently and together, a very powerful but easily accessible research tool. The following pages provide an indication of the sort of analysis that can be conducted using the project data and maps.

Results: Medieval settlement in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

The project data, available on the database and as a series of maps enables a wide range of issues pertaining to the nature and development of the medieval rural landscape to be explored and assessed. Four issues are considered to provide examples of the sort of assessment that can be carried out using the RCHME project data.



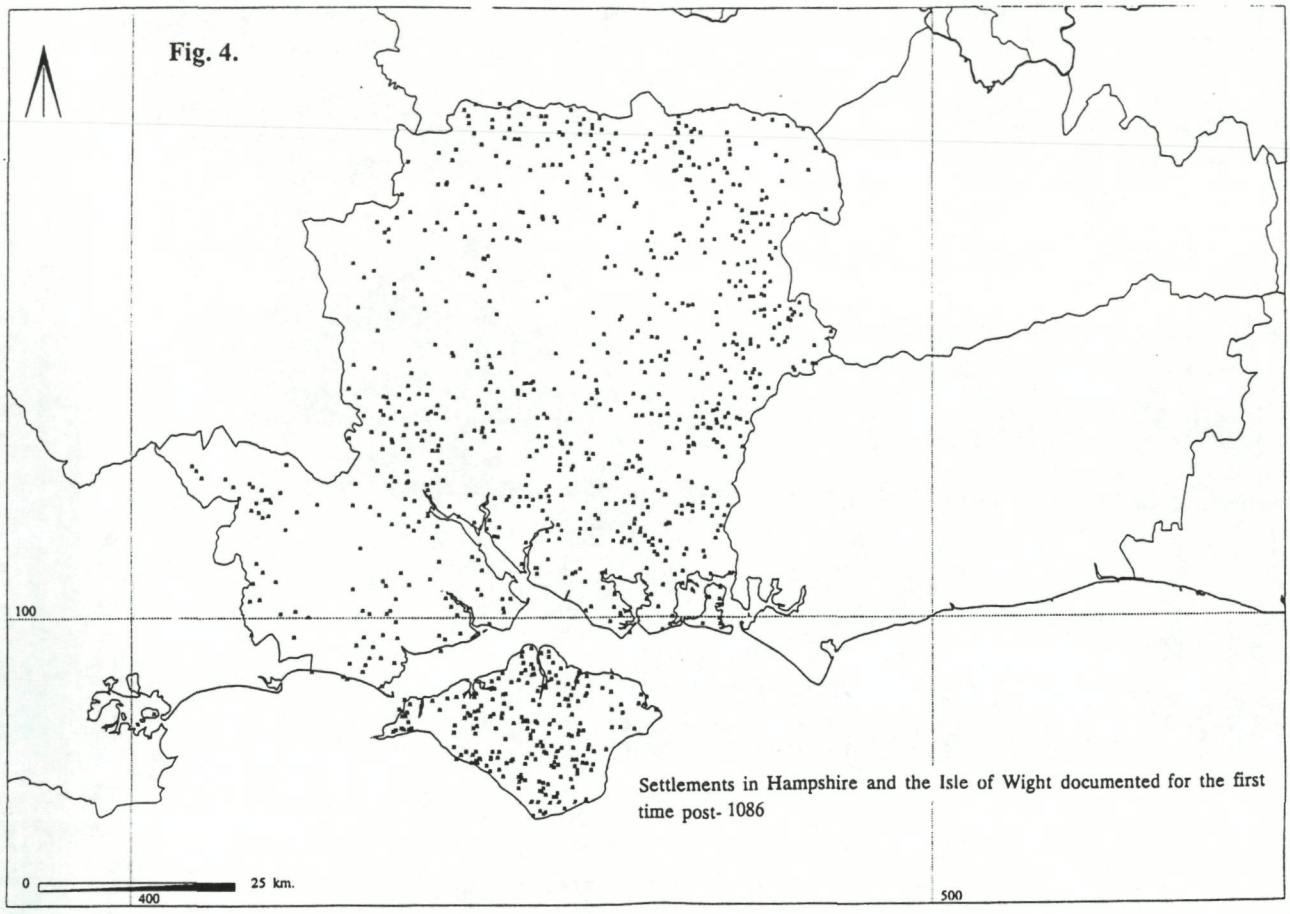
1) Settlement pattern

A computerised mapping software system was able to provide distribution maps of different settlement types in 1810. These showed clearly that nucleated villages dominated the major river valleys of the chalkland, and the chalk massif of central Hampshire (fig 2). Dispersed settlement types are very uncommon in these areas (fig 3). In contrast, it is clear that the north, east and south of the region is largely characterised by dispersed settlement; nucleation in these areas is associated with psuedo-urban function (the presence of a market, etc), or recent (nineteenth/twentieth century) expansion. Essentially the dispersed regions correspond to the area away from the chalk.

It is notable that there is some similarity in the distribution of evidence for dispersed settlement and that for settlements documented for the first time only in the later medieval period (fig 4). The database confirms this observation: 64% of dispersed settlements (interrupted row and common-edge) are documented for the first time post-1086, whereas for nucleated settlements (clusters and rows) the figure is only 40%. Both figures, of course, reflect the expansion in written records in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which led to many smaller settlements being recorded for the first time. But this does seem to indicate a greater degree of expansion in dispersed, woodland regions than in the nucleated champion regions.

The roots of this may lie in the relatively underexploited nature of woodland/heathland regions in earlier centuries. In the pre-Conquest period, 32% of all nucleated sites are referred to in documents, but for dispersed settlements the figure is only 8%. Interestingly, however, Domesday Book records similar percentages of both types (26% of all dispersed settlements are recorded there, compared to 28% of nucleated settlements), suggesting that woodland regions were 'catching up' fast in the later pre-Conquest centuries. Certainly by 1086, they do not appear to have been vast uncharted and unadministered wastelands. Equally, the woodland and heathland regions seem to have seen a particularly great expansion in settlement in the post-Conquest era, an observation which is supported by documentary references to assarting on many of the later medieval manors, including those of the Abbey of Winchester, whose pipe rolls documents many details of estate activities.

The correlation of earlier documentary evidence with that for the nineteenth century settlement pattern suggests that, while some elements of the later pattern are of late origin (much of the present settlement around the Solent, for example, post-dates even

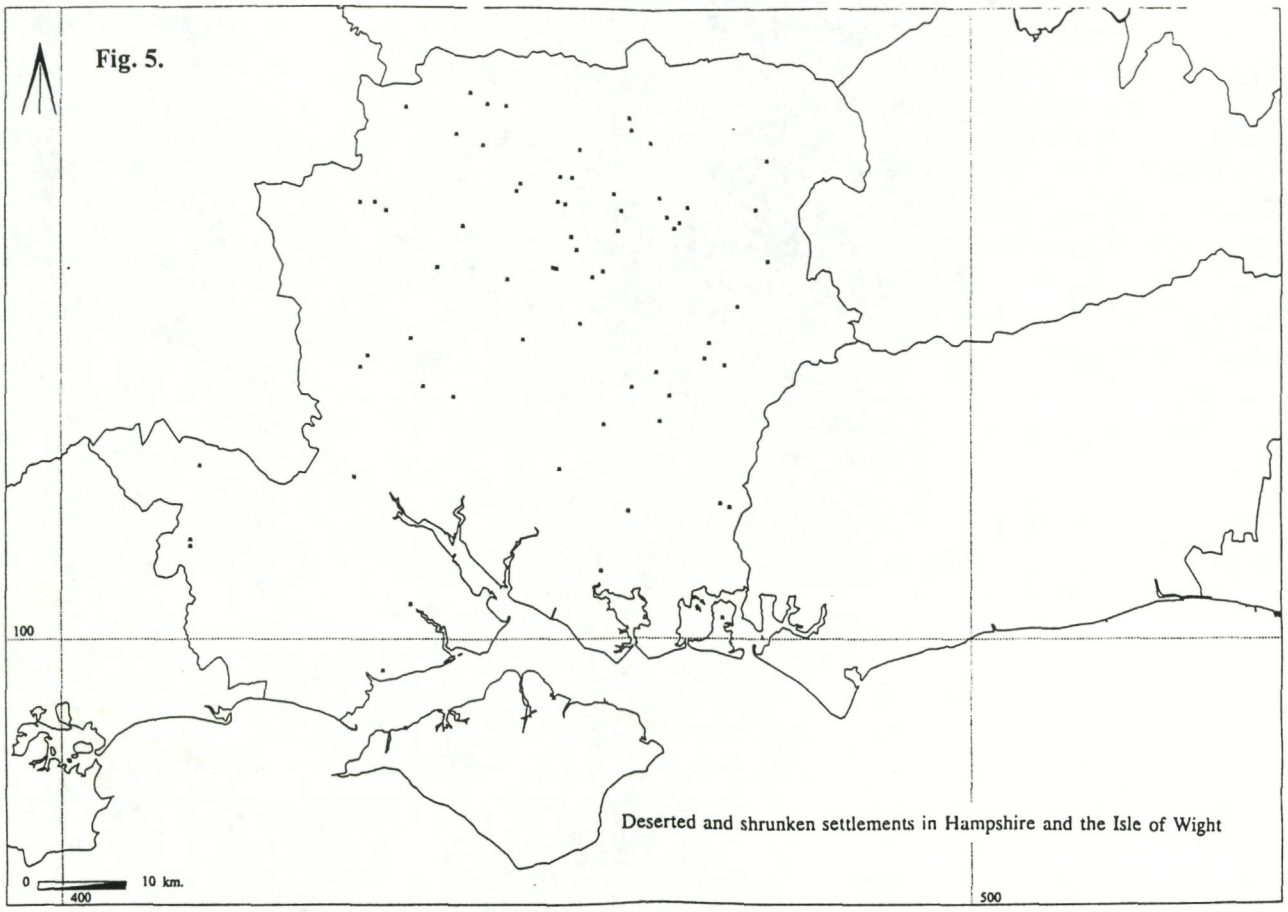


the early nineteenth century), the post-medieval patterns of dispersed and nucleated settlement may in many cases, give a fair indication of the medieval pattern. Another interesting figure which can be noted is that only 18% of common edge settlements are named in Domesday Book, while 20% are named for the first time in the fourteenth century. For interrupted rows, in contrast, 30% are name din 1086, and only 8% appear for the first time in the fourteenth century. While a documentary reference does not, of course, data the origins of the settlement, the difference between the two types of dispersed settlement may indicate that common-edge habitation is a later form of settlement. Only further archaeological investigation could confirm of refute this suggestion.

2) Field assessment and identification of deserted sites

Few sites which can confidently be classified as deserted are known in the region (fig 5). The possibility of using historical evidence to identify or predict likely deserted sites can be tested using the information recorded on the database. For example 119 sites are recorded in Domesday Book but omitted from 1334 lists: those with very limited settlement in 1810 are often classified as deserted medieval villages (DMVs). However, in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight only five such sites actually have any recorded archaeological evidence for shrinkage. The others therefore must be classified, on the basis of known evidence rather than presumed status, simply as settlements or documented place names. Sites whose population fell markedly between 1086 and 1327 might also be expected to be prime candidates for desertion in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and to exhibit evidence for shrinkage. The recorded population of 10 sites fell from 50% above average in 1086 to more than 25% below average in 1327. However, these were all still paying tax in 1524 (albeit with a low average population of 13.5 compared to 29 overall for the region), and none have recorded evidence for shrinkage or desertion.

These sites could usefully be targeted for future field assessment, to ascertain whether or not they have any earthwork evidence for contraction. However, in the meantime, it must be suspected that these falls in population in fact reflect, at least in part, the widespread fragmentation of Domesday manors into smaller taxation units in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. Chilcombe, for example had 9 churches and a recorded population of c. 213 in 1086: the fall to just 4 in 1327 must be due in part to the break-up of this large estate of the Bishop of Winchester into smaller taxable units.



During the project, 56 sites were selected for field assessment. Most were either isolated farmsteads whose names were documented in the medieval period or sites classified on archaeological record systems as deserted, in areas of predominantly dispersed settlement, for which archaeological evidence was particularly poor. Field assessment revealed that one in four had earthwork remains of settlement, but in no case were these extensive or substantial. The presence of other earthworks, including remains of ridge and furrow field systems, at a number of sites suggests that settlement evidence, had it existed, should have been preserved. The absence of large areas of abandoned former settlement suggests that the regions where settlement was dispersed in the nineteenth century were probably, likewise, areas generally lacking large nucleated villages in the medieval period. As a substantial proportion of sites visited had previously been classified as deserted, the field assessment indicated that extreme caution should be exercised in classifying settlements as deserted on historical evidence alone.

3) The early medieval period – shift and success

Of more than 2,700 sites recorded in the pilot, only 299 have any evidence for occupation in the early medieval period. For 210 of these the evidence is purely documentary; and only 39 actually have definite archaeological evidence for settlement. No archaeological evidence at all is known for early medieval settlement from the Isle of Wight. While these figures may seem to indicate something of a dearth of evidence for settlement of this period, the region does include the sites of Chalton Down (in south Hampshire) and Cowdery's Down (in north Hampshire), both of which have been extensively excavated (Addyman & Leigh 1973, Cunliffe 1973; Millet & James 1983).

Overall, only a handful of attested early medieval settlement sites were deserted before the Norman Conquest – even in the case of early (ie pre-7th century) Anglo-Saxon sites, most known sites continued in occupation in the post-Conquest era. There are however 21 sites which produced pottery finds but which could not be confidently classified as settlements, and most of these are from places which were not flourishing in the later period. These include Up Somborne, where seven sherds of (possibly residual) Saxon pottery were recovered from a post-hole; a deserted site in Faccombe parish where 6 sherds of grass-tempered ware were found in a remote downland situation, similarly sited pits associated with animal bone and Saxon pottery in Romsey Extra parish, and a single sherd found in

fields in Farringdon parish. The last 3 are from sites which are unoccupied in the post-conquest period, but the slight nature of the archaeological evidence means that they cannot realistically be classified as early medieval settlements, but as merely as pottery finds. Other pottery find spots are even less likely to represent settlement: some may be funerary vessels (such as at Compton and Hucklesbrook Farm (in Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley parish), many others such as at Lymington, Odiham or Barnes High (Isle of Wight), are dubious or unprovenanced. However the distribution of such evidence, and other deserted early medieval settlement sites does however generally favour the chalk downland and suggests an abandonment of these areas (which were extensively occupied in the Roman period) during the Anglo-Saxon period. This is supported by excavations at Chalton and Cowdery's Down, both downland sites which were abandoned by the mid-seventh century.

In other areas there is little or no evidence for deserted early medieval settlements. This is particularly significant in east Hampshire and the Avon Valley in west Hampshire which have been subject to intensive fieldwalking programmes (Shennan 1985; Light *et al* 1994;). The few abandoned early medieval sites which have been found in the Avon valley showed strong continuity with Roman pottery distribution. Most are also close to later medieval settlements, suggesting a process of gradual shift within the densely occupied river valleys. While the downlands seem to have been abandoned for settlement, elsewhere the assumption, based on present evidence, must be that settlement was either very sparse (which seems unlikely), or very conservative, mostly underlying or adjacent to later settlements. This contradicts current orthodoxy, based mostly on work carried out in the midlands, where it is thought that small dispersed early medieval sites were abandoned in large numbers, probably around the ninth century, and replaced by nucleated villages set within regular open field systems.

Settlement change in Hampshire seems to have been of a more limited extent, mainly comprising a much earlier (ie pre mid-eighth century) abandonment of the downland. Riverine settlement was always an enduring feature of the landscape in Roman, Anglo-Saxon and later medieval periods, but downland settlement was a feature only of particularly expansive periods, such as the Roman (and the high medieval, see below). It is of course, quite possible that Hampshire, whose terrain and political history over the Anglo-Saxon period were both very different to the midlands, did indeed have a correspondingly different process of settlement evolution during this period.

In fact, many early medieval settlements in the region seem, rather than being abandoned, to have survived and flourished. Examination of the project data suggests that there is a significant link between early occupation and enduring success. More than a third (12 out of 33) of early medieval settlement sites were towns or market villages in the later medieval period and three-quarters (25 out of 33) were medium or large settlements in the early nineteenth century. Overall, 12 of the 50 late medieval towns and market villages have archaeological evidence for early medieval settlement, and this must suggest that many other similar sites may also have Saxon precursors.

Even early-established sites which did not become markets seem to have been larger than average. The average population for these sites in 1086 was 49 (compared to 25 overall), in 1524 it was 72.5 (compared to 29 for all settlements). Only 5 have evidence for significant shrinkage or desertion in the later medieval period (2 are shrunken, 3 deserted). While large or urban sites are perhaps more likely to have been excavated, (in advance of development) introducing a possible bias to the sample, the fact that documented early medieval sites show a similarly higher than average population of 40 in 1086 supports the general suggestion of a link between Saxon occupation and post-Conquest longevity and prosperity. Interestingly, 19 out of the 33 sites with evidence for early settlement were also documented in the pre-Conquest period – an unusually good correlation!

4) Later medieval settlement – variety in desertion

In many areas the downland remained devoid of settlement from the early Saxon period onwards. In others, particularly in central and north Hampshire, settlements such as Hatch near Basingstoke (Fasham *et al* 1995), were established on downland in the late pre- and early post-Conquest period.

Few later medieval settlements with conclusive evidence for desertion are known in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, but the figures for those which can be identified reveal some interesting patterns. The average population for all sites recorded in Domesday Book was 25; for settlements which were later deserted (excluding Old Highclere, to which we will return below) it was only 15. In 1327 the average number of taxpayers for all recorded sites was 16, but only 9 for later deserted settlements. It seems that a significant number of deserted sites were ones which had always been smaller and poorer than average. However, the data suggests considerable variation in the progress of depopulation. Lomer, for exampl,e recorded 11 individuals in 1086, 7 in 1327, fewer than

ten households in 1428, but still had 6 (8 are listed in the second survey) taxpayers in 1524. With early medieval occupation attested by pottery finds and a documentary reference in AD 802, Lomer, although always small, seems to have maintained quite a stable population for most of the middle ages, and must have declined to its 1810 farmstead status in the post-medieval period. Apparently more erratically, Westbury (in East Meon) recorded a reasonable population of 13 individuals in 1086, contained only one taxpayer in 1327. The population recovered by 1524 to 9, but fell again in the post-medieval and was just a single farm by 1810.

Other sites show a different pattern again. Durton (in Arreton), for example, recorded with 2 occupants (but with 2.5 ploughs, a very much higher ratio than normal) in 1086. Although, unusually, it rose in value between 1066 and 1086, it lacked a church, had vanished as an independently taxed unit by 1327, and was just a single, unremarkable farmhouse in 1810 (Winter 1984, 187). Durton has been classified as a deserted village by the MVRG and the NMR on the basis of its disappearance from documentary sources, but the evidence suggests that it may never have been more than a single farm. Contraction, if it did occur, probably dates to the eleventh century or earlier.

Old Highclere, in contrast again, stands out as the site of a probable Saxon minster and with 69 recorded inhabitants, had a much larger population than any other deserted site in 1086. Significantly, its abandonment was not a result of decline: it was forcibly depopulated (or, in effect, relocated to the existing site of (New) Highclere) when a park was created in the thirteenth century. Other large settlements which were later deserted are Merdon and Newton. Newton was a borough in the thirteenth century; while Merdon was associated with a castle and paid the highest sum of all deserted settlements in 1334, but was reduced to 9 taxpayers by 1524, and just 2 farmsteads by 1810. The decline of these settlements may be related to their commercial failure.

The evidence collected in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight points to considerable variation in the processes by which settlements came to be deserted. It is notable that there is no evidence for the sort of sweeping depopulation seen across vast swathes of the midlands. This suggests that depopulation generally occurred on a settlement-by-settlement basis, for specific site-related reasons, and not as part of a widespread, chronologically distinct process involving rural recession.

Conclusion

The RCHME project in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has increased our knowledge and understanding of a range of aspects of the historical process of settlement between AD 410-1540 in the project region, which will be of value to those involved in curating, managing, studying, recording or surveying medieval settlement sites. The project has clarified the present extent of knowledge and highlighted a number of *lacunae* which exist in the archaeological evidence, particularly in areas of dispersed settlement, thus identifying priorities for future work.

The RCHME research has also created consistent, standardised records for all known or suspected medieval settlements which will improve the ability of county archaeologists to manage and protect settlement sites. Despite planning legislation, such sites are often particularly threatened by development ranging from modern village infilling to agricultural building construction, and most are at present excluded from archaeological record systems such as the National Monuments Record (NMR) or county Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) and can thus fail to trigger appropriate mitigatory action.

The corpus of information available as a result of the RCHME project should also benefit the academic community for whom, it is hoped, the database, printouts, maps and report will provide evidence for, and stimuli towards, new research directions. As always, the most difficult part of any research is working out which questions should be asked of the data. The preceding pages have outlined a few of those which have suggested themselves during the project and which may stimulate debate, but detailed pursuance of research themes is beyond the scope of the RCHME project. One of the great merits of this approach, however, is that the data collected will henceforth be available for anyone to revisit and re-examine.

It is also hoped that the information will be of interest to the general public, many of whom live in the settlements which have been studied.

From a European perspective, it is important to note that one of the reasons why the RCHME work was carried out in southern England was to establish whether the methodology developed for the east midlands would work in a different region – and ultimately on a national scale. The work in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has established that it would. Extending the scope of such research beyond the original east midlands focus allows comparison of a standardised set of information for very different regions which is vitally important if we are to understand the interplay of various factors in the evolution of medieval settlement in England.

Could such an approach usefully be carried out in other European countries? RCHME research in southern England indicates that the basic principle – of methodically synthesising and analysing as much as possible of the information pertinent to medieval settlement from diverse sources to assess the present state of knowledge, create a consistent record and identify priorities for future work – could feasibly and usefully be applied to any European country, all of which have a historic pre-modern period. Such studies carried out in other European countries would allow evidence and ideas from different countries to inform and stimulate each other across the continent, for an era when cultural and territorial boundaries were in almost constant flux, when ideas could travel widely, and European integration was less an issue than a fact of life. However limited and problematic the evidence for medieval settlement might be, assembling and assessing it in this manner is one way of making the most of it, wherever the work is being carried out.

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Recent research in medieval rural nucleated settlement in Ireland

Since the last Medieval Europe Conference, some five years ago, there has been continuing research in the field of rural settlement studies in Ireland generally. Although this paper will concentrate on giving an overview of research on nucleated rural settlement in the High Middle Ages, that is from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, it will also briefly examine the latest research on the earlier period from the coming of Christianity in the fifth century up until the Norman invasion of 1169-70.

In the first millennium AD Ireland was dominated by a dispersed pattern of rural settlement, the main element being the ringfort or defended farmstead of the free element in early Irish society. There were at least 45,000 examples of this settlement form found all over the Irish countryside, mainly constructed between 600AD-900AD (Stout 1997). The ringfort itself is an annular settlement form delimited by an external ditch with an internal bank, with an average diameter of 30 metres. In the eastern half of the country where the soil cover is thicker they are often known as raths, while in the western, more rocky areas, they are known as cashels as their banks are often constructed of dry stone. Recent research by Stout, using County Offaly as a detailed study area, has shown that ringforts in densely settled upland areas were frequently located more than 2 km away from ecclesiastical sites, while marshland zones were dominated by well-defended ringforts situated in strategic locations (Stout 1996). In some cases they are also accompanied by souterrains, underground passages which were possibly either used for storage or as hiding places for the community who lived in the ringfort. The chronology of these enigmatic features is still not fully established although there is a secure date for at least one example at Coolcran, County Fermanagh where the oak posts which originally supported a roof of oak planks have been dendrochronologically dated to 822+9 AD (Williams 1985). However, this may not be a typical souterrain because the great majority of surviving examples seemed to have been constructed of dry stone.

Along with the ringforts there were also possibly over 1,200 crannógs, which were lake dwellings often constructed on artificial islands made out of soil, timber, stones and even from the occupation remains of the settlement itself (Edwards 1990). They often have their origins in prehistory, but some have important early medieval horizons. One of the most spectacular later examples is located at Moynagh Lough in County Meath, currently being excavated by Bradley. There was also substantial prehistoric settlement which predated the construction of the crannóg in the first half of the seventh century. The crannóg itself had five occupation layers which lasted from then to the end of the eighth century and revealed evidence for possible workshops which included metalworking. Many spectacular finds of the period have also been found in these levels, such as some very unusual artefacts such as two Merovingian glass vessels and a bronze spatula, which may have been part of a cosmetic set (Bradley 1996, 70).

There were also many hundreds of ecclesiastical enclosures, not all necessarily of monastic origin, many of which have been identified by aerial photography (Edwards 1990). They are most densely distributed in a central band stretching from Dublin in the east to Clare on the western coast. As well as these we have many examples of early medieval monasteries ranging from the small isolated examples like Skellig Michael located on a rock off the County Kerry coast, to the larger examples such as Clonmacnoise on the bank of the River Shannon in County Offaly that arguably grew into some kind of town by the eleventh century.

There has also been an attempt in recent years to locate evidence for rural nucleated settlements in pre-Norman Ireland. Geographers such as Evans have suggested, based on an interpretation of the early law tracts, that these might have been the dwellings of those poorer members of early Irish society who lived in separate settlements from the free element of that society who inhabited the ringforts (Evans 1964). Research has centred around the 'clachan', which has been identified by Proudfoot as 'a cluster of farm houses and associated outbuildings usually grouped without any formal plan' (Proudfoot 1959, 110). A

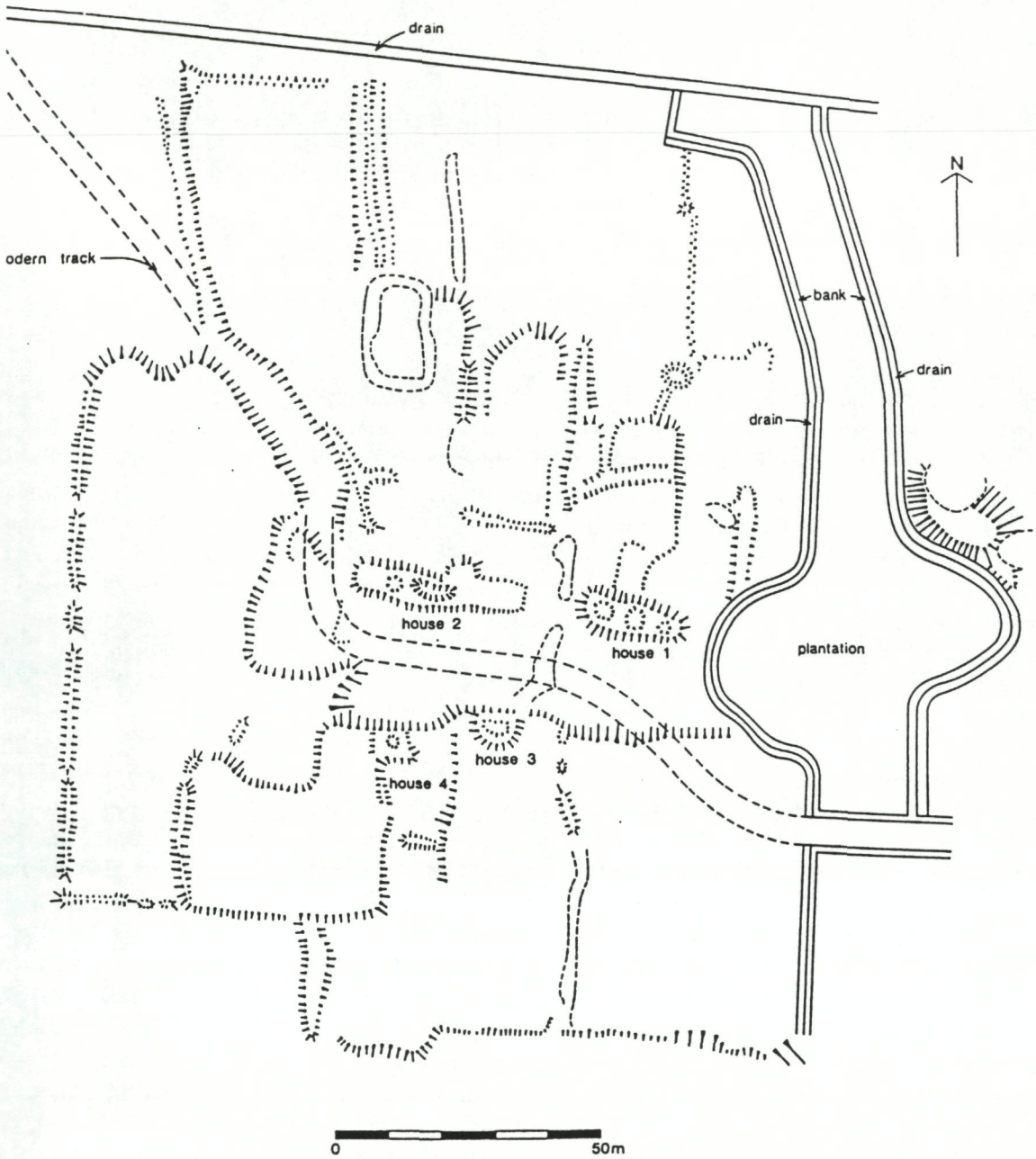

Fig. 1. - *Plan of Piperstown Deserted Medieval Village, County Louth.*

few of these settlements have survived to this day in areas as diverse as Donegal in the north-west, to the southern tip of Kilkenny in the more prosperous south-eastern part of the island. Examples can be dated from at least as early as the seventeenth century in the cartographic sources of the period, but all attempts to prove a medieval origin for them have been fruitless to date. The archaeological excavation of the deserted clachan at Murphystown, County Down, the only example to have been scientifically excavated, produced no conclusive evidence of a medieval origin for this settlement (Barry 1994, 21).

To complete the picture of the rural settlement pattern of pre-Norman Ireland, there is mounting evidence to show that some of the major prehistoric monuments such as the hillforts and promontory forts were still being occupied in this period. For instance, the interior of the Iron Age promontory fort at Dunbeg on the Dingle Peninsula was occupied by the remains of a dry stone beehive structure which had two tenuous occupation layers that were radiocarbon dated from the end of the ninth to the beginning of the eleventh century AD (Barry 1981, 311-317). As well as these earlier sites which were re-occupied there were probably also unenclosed dispersed settlements existing in this period which are very difficult to locate because of the non-existence of an identifiable bank or ditch.

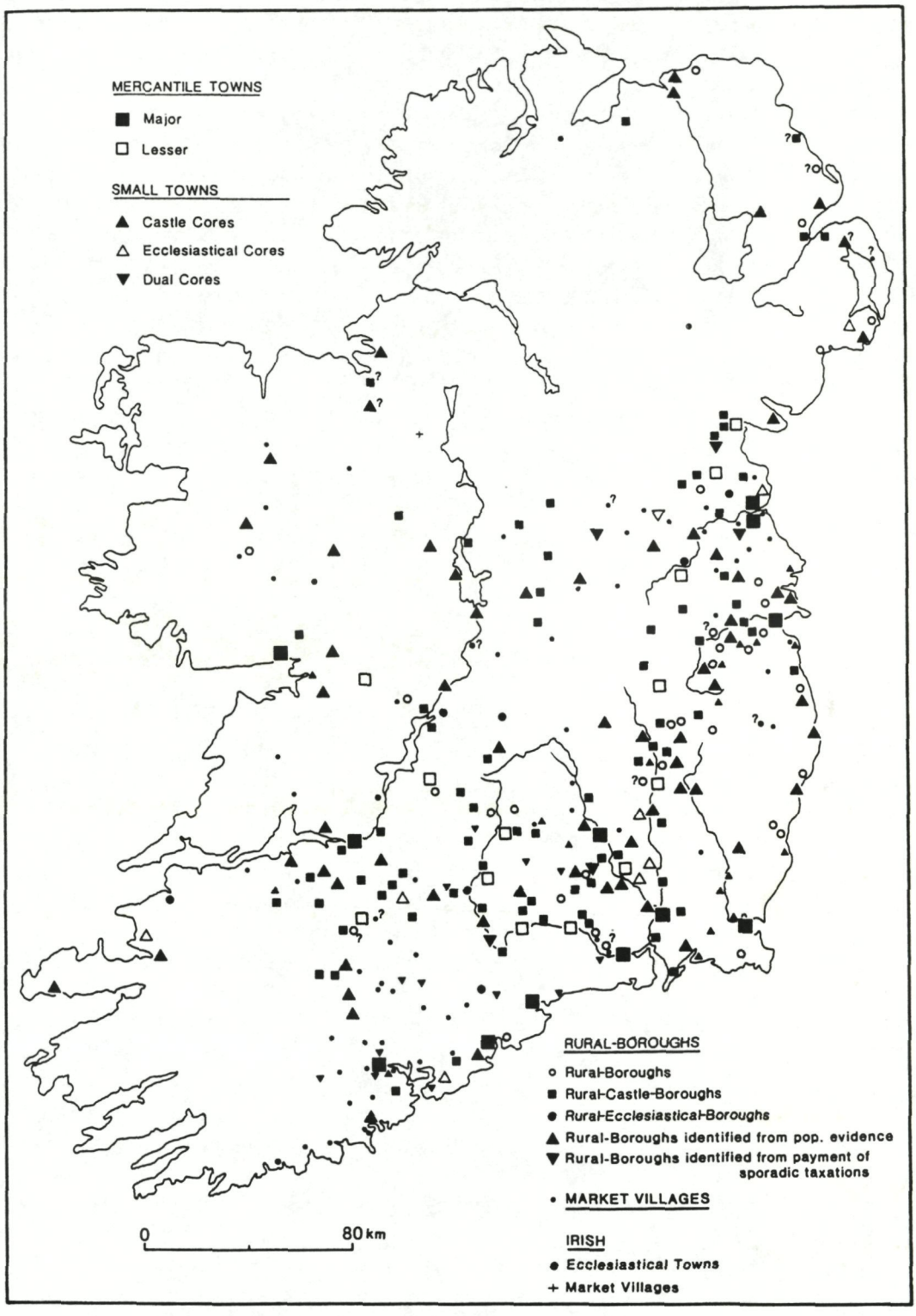

Fig. 2. - *Distribution map of Anglo-Norman nucleated settlements in Ireland (After Graham 1993).*

It was undoubtedly the Anglo-Normans who introduced a full network of nucleated settlements into the two-thirds of Ireland that they conquered. Before they came in 1169-70 the only nucleated settlements were either the ports, mainly located along the east coast of the country, which were founded by the Scandinavians in the tenth and eleventh centuries or some of the larger monasteries such as Glendalough in County Wicklow whose wealth and ecclesiastical fame drew a large population concentration around them (Edwards 1990). This hierarchical network of nucleated settlements that the Anglo-Normans introduced into Ireland can best be seen in Graham's map (Fig. 2) where all types of Anglo-Norman nucleated settlement are shown, from the largest cities to the smallest villages. This paper will concentrate on these vil-

lages, but before discussing them further it is important to explain the term 'rural borough' which appears in the legend of the map. This was first used by Glasscock in 1970 to identify Anglo-Norman rural nucleated settlements in Ireland no larger than contemporary English villages but which were given borough status in Ireland. These borough charters were granted by the great Anglo-Norman nobles in order to attract settlers from the overcrowded regions of lowland Britain to settle their relatively underpopulated colony in Ireland (Glasscock 1970).

Despite all the recent large-scale archaeological investigation of the Anglo-Norman levels of cities such as Dublin or Waterford there have been few archaeological excavations of Anglo-Norman deserted nucleated settlements in Ireland, especially of their villages (Barry 1994). Indeed, between Glasscock's investigation of the deserted manorial village of Liathmore, County Tipperary in 1968-9 and that at Piperstown in Co. Louth in 1987 there has only been one other archaeological excavation of part of a possible deserted medieval village located beside Bourchier's Castle, Lough Gur, County Limerick. Here, Cleary excavated two medieval houses and four huts which may have also dated to the medieval period, which arguably were part of a village clustered around the thirteenth-century Fitzgerald Castle which was located under the later Bourchier's Castle (Cleary 1983). At Liathmore, which has yet to be fully published, Glasscock found the base of a round tower of the earlier monastic site as well as further evidence of seventeenth-century settlement there that Leask and Macalister had also located during an earlier excavation. Disappointingly for him he was unable to find any evidence of medieval occupation on this important site (Glasscock 1970).

Piperstown was chosen because it was the only known Deserted Medieval Village in County Louth, Ireland's smallest county, and because there had not been a modern excavation of such a settlement type in the eastern half of the country. It had not been recognised as a possible Deserted Medieval Village by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland until 1974 because it lacked an identifiable church site and because the motte was very small and irregular (Buckley & Sweetman 1991). There is, however, the ruins of the medieval church of St. Mary at Drumshallon located around 1/2 km to the south of the present village earthworks. This church might well have also functioned as the parish church of the village community of Piperstown. The village is located on the margins of high ground, some 300-400 metres OD, but it is surrounded by lower more agriculturally rich lands on all but its western side. It first enters the documentary record in 1316 when 14 cottages at 'Pippardeston' were 'burnt by the Irish' during the disorders which were attendant upon the Scottish Bruce Invasion of Ireland (1315-18). Thus it probably had its origins earlier in the previous century when the Pipards settled this part of Ireland in the decades following the Anglo-Norman Invasion (Duffy 1997, 99). Obviously the village had shrunk in size during the Middle Ages as today only four possible house platforms can be identified on the landscape (Fig. 1).

Because of a general lack of funding only one season was completed, and only one house platform was fully excavated as well as one section which was cut through the westerly perimeter bank of the village. Excavation of the platform did produce evidence for a very tenuous late medieval or post-medieval house with external dimensions 8 m in length by 5.6 m wide. It was divided into two by an internal partition, with the inhabitants living in the western end and the animals on the eastern side of the partition, with a drain to take away their waste. The medieval finds included 29 sherds of medieval cooking ware as well as some metal artefacts of the same period. The medieval metal finds were a thirteenth century hunting arrow head as well as a Jews harp of possible medieval date. Two small knife blades, two nails and a small horseshoe were also found but they were not diagnostic enough to be dated precisely. The other metal finds were either unidentifiable or were of post-medieval date. Indeed the greatest number of pottery sherds, over 250 in all, came from the first half of the eighteenth century when the village was finally deserted. The fact that it was deserted in the post-medieval period is largely in line with what is suspected for many other village desertions in Ireland which were not deserted until after the fifteenth century, such as Liathmore, County Tipperary or Caherguillamore, County Limerick (Barry 1994).

Generally speaking the artefacts recovered at Piperstown would indicate that the dwellers in this particular house did not enjoy a high standard of living because no sherds of imported medieval fine ware were found nor any medieval coins or fine quality metal objects, such as were located at Caherguillamore in County Limerick, when two medieval houses were excavated in the 1940s (Ó Ríordáin & Hunt 1942). Nevertheless, after the excavation was completed a number of fifteenth and sixteenth century coins were found on the site, an indicator perhaps of the thriving nature of the village during the later Middle Ages. The tenuous nature of the house, with its cheap and readily available building materials, would also suggest that its inhabitants were not very wealthy. Indeed it was probably very similar to the mud walled cabins that were still to be found in

different parts of rural Ireland in the last century and even in the first few decades of this present century. It was a simple one-storied structure with few if any window openings, and where the smoke from the hearth would just have filtered out through its thatched roof. It was probably occupied at the end of the Middle Ages in Ireland although it was difficult to be entirely sure about the exact length of occupation because of the general lack of securely stratified dateable finds associated with the house's occupation levels.

The general paucity of finds also meant that it was difficult to be sure about the socio-economic basis of the village community here as represented by the inhabitants of this particular house. It was probably significant that only a small number of animal bones were discovered, which may indicate that although animals were kept there that they were not such an important feature of their diet. Alternatively, the small number of animal bones recovered were in such poor condition that they could not be readily identified, so it is possible that the acidic nature of the soil had completely destroyed the remainder of these bones. The final possibility is that the animal bones may have been dumped some way from the house platform, and so were not detected during the excavation. Analysis of the drain which ran through the house produced some possible husks of grain seeds, while the low-lying lands surrounding the village on all but its western edge were probably under arable in the Middle Ages. It is likely that this was where the village's open-field system was located in the medieval period. As well as these cereals which probably were an important part of their diet the village's inhabitants obviously supplemented this by hunting deer and other game, as is shown by the hunting arrow head located during the excavation. Beyond these tantalisingly limited pieces of evidence we cannot be completely sure of this important aspect of everyday life in this medieval village.

This probable desertion date is very different to that found in many areas of medieval England, especially in the Midlands, where the major desertion period seems to have been in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when arable farming gave way to an emphasis on pastoral farming in the changed economic conditions of the later Middle Ages (Beresford & Hurst 1971). In Ireland the major period of desertion would appear to have been in the seventeenth century when war and famine combined to finally destroy marginal settlements which had existed since the expansionary thirteenth century. These factors even affected important settlements such as the prosperous town of Newtown Jerpoint which controlled a major bridge across the River Nore in the heartland of the Anglo-Norman colony in Leinster. At the height of its prosperity in the thirteenth century it had a population of at least 250 family members belonging to its governing class of burgesses, as well as from among its free tenants. It is arguable that its full population size was at least twice this figure because the surviving medieval documents do not record the numbers of people who did not own any land in the town. But by the later Middle Ages it had been limping along for a century or so after the dissolution of the nearby wealthy Cistercian abbey of Jerpoint in 1538. This event meant the end of its important trading relationship with the religious community there which had started with the foundation of the town in 1200 AD, and which was central to the economic well-being of the town. It would appear that a severe plague in County Kilkenny in the first half of the seventeenth century, together with the presence of Cromwellian armies in the locality in the 1640s all led to its final abandonment .

In this discussion of current research into the medieval rural nucleated settlement pattern it is important to note that one of the newest developments has been the attempt to examine the Gaelic Irish component in a more systematic way. The Discovery Programme Ltd. which was set up to encourage large-scale archaeological research projects in Ireland has just employed someone to produce a programme for future research on all types of medieval rural settlement in Ireland, including the heretofore elusive Gaelic settlements, both dispersed and nucleated. It has been determined by the Directors of the Discovery Programme that this important yet often neglected aspect of the rural settlement pattern be given priority in this investigation. Until recently almost all medieval rural settlement research has been focused upon the Anglo-Norman element within it. It is scarcely surprising that the concentration of research in this field up to the present has been on the Anglo-Normans because they left behind them many manorial and central government documents which give the modern researcher much additional useful information on their settlement pattern. The Gaelic Irish sources, on the other hand, are usually either literary or annalistic writings which are more difficult to interpret if we wish to understand their settlement forms in any detail (Duffy 1997). Secondly, the settlement forms introduced into Ireland by the Anglo-Normans have also been studied closely in the other parts of Europe that were controlled by them, so this gives an excellent basis for comparative research. But the new emphasis on Gaelic Ireland in future research may well help to rectify this imbalance in our contemporary knowledge of medieval Irish settlement generally.

In conclusion, although nucleated settlements were usually the most prominent components of much of the rural settlement pattern within the Anglo-Norman colony it is arguable that there was also a greater number of dispersed settlements than was originally thought. For instance, the 750 or so moated sites, many of them the defended manor houses of the Anglo-Norman lesser nobility of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were dispersed widely over the colony and especially on its periphery (Barry 1994, 84-93). There is also increasing evidence for the continued occupation of ringforts throughout the later Middle Ages, particularly in the Gaelic-Irish controlled areas of the north and west outside the control of the Anglo-Normans. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Norman's greatest and perhaps most enduring contribution to the settlement pattern of Ireland was the establishment of rural nucleated settlements all across the eastern half of the island.

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Abbreviation: OD = Ordnance Datum.

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